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Daily Report
Near East & South Asia

FBIS-NES-96-066 *4 April 1996*

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Inter-Arab Affairs

Inter-Arab Affairs: Chief Says Arab League 'Supports' UN-Iraq Talks

JN0304104196 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1858 GMT 2 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 2 Apr (INA)—Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid asserted that the League is holding contacts with the United Nations and Iraq to reach a just and fair agreement on their dialogue on oil in return for food, medicine, and basic needs of the Iraqi people.

At a new conference held at the headquarters of the Arab and foreign correspondents society in Cairo, he said that the Arab League supports the Iraqi-UN talks and believes that it is important to reach an agreement that will help meet the Iraqi people's needs.

He stressed that Arab reconciliation is now an urgent need and that work should be done to achieve it. He pointed out that the threats posed to the Arab nation will not stop in the absence of effective Arab solidarity.

He also reiterated the Arab League's support for the legal and historical rights of Iraq and Syria regarding the Tigris and Euphrates rivers as two international rivers. He urged Turkey to hold talks with Iraq and Syria to reach a just and fair solution to the water issue.

He also urged the United States, France, and Britain to respond to the Arab League's endeavors to resolve the Lockerbie crisis within the framework of the supremacy of law and the Libyan Jamahiriyah's sovereignty by trying the two suspects before the International Court of Justice.

Palestinian Affairs

Palestinian Affairs: 'Violent' Rally Disrupts Council Meeting; 'Arafat 'Rescued'

TA0304153196 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 1400 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Palestinian Police fired shots in the air to disperse students demonstrating in Ramallah during a meeting of the autonomous legislative council. At one point the students, who were protesting the crackdown on Palestinian militants, broke through police lines and marched toward the building in which Yasir 'Arafat was chairing this first-ever session in the West Bank. 'Arafat left the meeting to address the students, who were angry over the raid at al-Najah University in Nabulus on Saturday [30 March].

At the opening of the council meeting, 'Arafat ordered all representatives of the media to leave. He said the session was secret and that he had not come to speak about politics. When Hanan 'Ashrawi, who heads the Palestinian Civil Rights Movement, asked why reporters were being banned she was told: Just sit down, and take your seat; we'll make the decisions.

[Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew at 1500 GMT on 3 April adds that "the legislative council meeting in Ramallah ended abruptly due to a violent demonstration and rioting by 2,000 students, most of them from Bi'r Zayt University and some of them from al-Najah University in Nabulus." The report notes that "al-Hajj Isma'il, the Palestinian Police chief in the West Bank, was summoned to the building. He rescued 'Arafat and brought him to police headquarters in Ramallah. Surrounded by his bodyguards, 'Arafat tried in vain to address the students outside the police building."]

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat Stresses 'Inviolability' of Universities

JN0304183296 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1700 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat emphasized the inviolability of universities and educational institutes. 'Arafat said this at the Legislative Council meeting in Ramallah.

President 'Arafat decided to form a special guard to protect universities and institutes in cooperation with the administrations of these schools.

President 'Arafat also decided to transfer the Nabulus Governorate police director to Gaza to complete the investigation on the recent al-Najah University incidents.

Addressing Palestinian university students in Ramallah today, President 'Arafat suggested that a student delegation be formed to meet with him at the Ramallah Governorate headquarters so that he can listen to the students' demands and discuss their affairs.

Palestinian Affairs: 3 Apr Legislative Council Meeting Reported

JN0404101696 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0400 GMT 4 Apr 96

[Report by 'Asif al-Humaydi in Ramallah; from "A New Day" program]

[FBIS Translated Text] The members of the Legislative Council, which held a session in Ramallah yesterday, unanimously stressed the importance of enhancing political guidance for the Palestinian security organs in order to raise the level of awareness among the personnel of the various security organs.

During the session, which was attended by President Yasir 'Arafat, the deputies discussed the violations

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committed by some security organs' personnel. At the same time, they stressed the positive role these organs are playing in preserving the national gains and the newly born Palestinian achievement.

Deputies Ahmad al-Batsh, Ziyad Abu-'Amr, and Hatim 'Abd-al-Qadir called for releasing all those detained by the National Authority if they prove to be not guilty. They asserted that the law must take its course.

The deputies discussed the Israeli forces' confiscation of Palestinian territories, particularly in the Bethlehem and Tulkarm areas. Deputy Salah al-Ta'mari called for enhancing the judicial system with new elements who have a good reputation.

Deputy Intisar al-Wazir stressed the importance of reconsidering the economic agreements signed between the National Authority and Israel.

Dr. Haydar 'Abd-al-Shafi stated that the recent practices of Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] harm the national interest, and that there are no differences over this matter. He added that Israel continues its aggressive practices and unreasonable violations which conflict with the spirit of the agreement.

Regarding economic aspects, the deputies urged the entire National Authority to assume responsibility for improving the deteriorating Palestinian economy. Proposals were submitted in this regard calling for boycotting Israeli commodities which have Palestinian substitutes.

President Yasir 'Arafat stressed the importance of preserving the Palestinian achievement and that we should not permit foreign conspiracies to undermine the embryonic dream.

Deputy Hasan Khurayshah called for raising the level of the press so that it becomes the fourth branch of authority, rather than a hired limb. He added that education and providing opportunities for learning in various governorates in the homeland must be on the agenda of the Legislative Council.

Deputy Dr. Hanan 'Ashrawi discussed two basic issues; namely, the siege and the settlements. She said that the Arab and world parliaments must be encouraged to use pressure in order to lift the siege imposed on Palestine.

Regarding the settlements, Deputy 'Ashrawi called for new international sponsorship of the peace process in order to pressure the Israeli Government into stopping the settlement activity and confiscating Palestinian land.

Some deputies discussed the need to bring in the Palestinian liberation forces from abroad, especially since they include many qualified personnel.

Al-Tayyib 'Abd-al-Rahim reviewed the National Authority's recent move in which it did its best to extend a hand to and hold a comprehensive dialogue with Hamas in order to preserve the Palestinian internal front.

He said that for the National Authority, the principles of dialogue are: Yes to dialogue, yes to democratic opposition, and no to arms. He asserted that there is nothing called political detention only security detention. This is because political detention harms the national interest, he added.

Commenting on this issue, Deputy 'Abbas Zaki stressed the need to continue the dialogue in order to safeguard the internal front after the Hamas detainees are released in accordance with the law.

At the end of the session, Legislative Council Speaker Ahmad Quray' also known as Abu-'Ala', formed a committee to draft a statement on the overall deliberations. The committee includes the following deputies: Rawhi Fattuh, 'Azzam al-Ahmad, Hasan 'Asfur, 'Imad al-Faluji, Nabil 'Amr, Dr. Ziyad Abu-'Amr, Dr. Sa'ib 'Urayqat, Marwan al-Barghuthi, Ahmad al-Dik, and Dr. Hanan 'Ashrawi.

The session adjourned until 1030 today. The deputies will today discuss the formation of various committees to follow up on the topics listed on the agenda.

Palestinian Affairs: Fatah Revolutionary Council Expresses Support for PA

JN0304211196 Gaza Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation Television Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 3 Apr 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Fatah Movement's Revolutionary Council said it supports the Palestinian Authority [PA] and abides by all the agreements signed between the PLO and Israel.

In a statement issued at the end of its first meeting on Palestinian soil, the Revolutionary Council called on peace-loving forces in Palestine and Israel to work to protect peace. The council condemned the Israeli measures in Jerusalem, saying they are null, illegal, and a blatant violation of the agreements that have been signed. The council also called for lifting the Israeli military siege on Palestine and for withdrawal from Hebron.

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Palestinian Affairs: Source Claims Fatah Discussed Hamas-Jordan Agreement

JN0304212396 Abu Dhabi AL-ITTIHAD in Arabic 2 Apr 96 p 26

[FBIS Translated Text] Ramallah — A well-informed Palestinian source told AL-ITTIHAD that Fatah Movement's Central Committee, which met early this week in Gaza, was briefed on documents concerning an agreement between Jordan and Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] to return the West Bank to Jordan's Administration.

The source, who asked to remain anonymous, said the committee members discussed this issue in detail and decided to continue the large-scale arrest campaign against Hamas members.

Palestinian Affairs: UNSC Head Briefs Members on 'Arafat's Letter on 'Siege'

JN0304211796 Gaza Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation Television Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 3 Apr 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] The current UN Security Council [UNSC] president informed the UNSC members of President Yasir 'Arafat's letter to the UNSC on the economic, political, and security perils resulting from the continued Israeli military siege imposed on Palestine about two months ago.

A spokesman for the UN secretary general said that Dr. Butrus Butrus-Ghali received a letter from President 'Arafat calling for an urgent Security Council meeting to discuss the deteriorating economic situation of the Palestinian people in light of the Israeli military siege and its impact on the peace process.

Palestinian Affairs: Police Arrest Islamic Jihad Leader in Rafah

TA0404121296 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1100 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Early this morning, the Palestinian Police arrested Shaykh Nafidh 'Azzam, an Islamic Jihad leader from the Gaza Strip. The police also searched his house in Rafah.

Our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem notes that the Palestinian Police have been holding three other Islamic Jihad leaders under arrest for the past three weeks.

Palestinian Affairs: Islamic Jihad Leader Promises More Attacks

JN0404102796 London AL-WASAT in Arabic 1-7 Apr 96 pp 14-18

[Interview with Dr. Ramadan 'Abdallah Shalah, leader of the Islamic Jihad Movement, by Ibrahim Humaydi in the al-Biqa' Valley, Lebanon; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Humaydi] Unlike previous operations carried out by the Islamic Jihad which were directed against Israeli military targets, the Tel Aviv operation targeted civilians. Is there any change in the movement's policy?

[Shalah] First, I must make it clear that we as Muslims do not wish death to anyone. In sanctioning jihad, the holy Koran says: "Fighting is prescribed for you, and ye dislike it." [Koranic verse] We hate war, but it was imposed on us. The Jews imposed it by occupying our territory and expelling us from it. As a Palestinian, I do not have a homeland or carry a passport like any other citizen in any other country. Millions of our people are in the same situation. No one is asking about us, and no one cares about our tragedy.

Had the Jews stayed in New York, Poland, or Russia, we would not have considered taking up arms against them. But when they come to Jerusalem, Haifa, Yafo, and Ashqelon to enjoy a good life there after murdering and expelling their residents, then this is unacceptable by any logic or law.

We always urge our mujahidin to strike at the military targets of the occupation army. The Zionist enemy, however, did not show any mercy toward our people or nation. When Dr. al-Shaqaqi was assassinated in Malta, he was not a military man who was carrying arms. He was an unarmed civilian. Those who were massacred by the Zionist (Baruch) Goldstein were not standing in trenches on war fronts, but were kneeling in prayer in the Ibrahimi Mosque (on 25 February 1994). In southern Lebanon, the mujahidin confronted the occupation troops and their armed patrols. The enemy was pouring fire with its warplanes and artillery on the heads of innocent and unarmed civilians to retaliate against its failure and defeat in the face of the Islamic resistance.

Therefore, the question about civilians must be put to the Israelis. They started the aggression and they imposed this war. Since it is a war, anything could happen even if one does not wish it to happen.

[Humaydi] Why did the movement not publish the name of the person who carried out the operation, unlike the case in previous operations?

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[Shalah] The name of the martyr was not published for technical, and primarily, security reasons decided by the brothers in the military organization. If they think it is useful to publish the name, they do so. If they decide otherwise, then there is no objection.

[Humaydi] Does the Islamic Jihad think that by carrying out the Tel Aviv operation, it avenged the assassination of al-Shaqaqi?

[Shalah] Our jihad is basically a just struggle to regain usurped rights, and not a personal vendetta. But when Israel commits a crime as big as assassinating an Islamic leader like Dr. al-Shaqaqi, the blood of the symbol martyr turns into a landmark on the path of jihad and a new impetus to the resistance movement. Because of their foolishness, ignorance, and blind hatred, they (the Israelis) do not know what Dr. Fathi al-Shaqaqi symbolized for us; nor do they know the significance of the assassination crime and the degree of our loss. Even if we consider all the jihad operations which we carried out since the assassination of Abu-Ibrahim [Fathi al-Shaqaqi] until we meet him, God willing, in paradise, were a response to his assassination, then that would not be enough to quench our thirst for revenge. The Israelis must expect more strikes. They will read the name of al-Shaqaqi in every statement about any military operation. They must know that blood begets blood and that murder and violence will only produce more violence.

[Humaydi] Do you think that the punishments Israel metes out against the Palestinian people after every military operation will weaken the people's sympathy for you?

[Shalah] Israel wants to tell people that the siege and the suffering are caused by the military operations. However, our people understand that occupation is the reason for the suffering and all the calamities that face our people. The Israelis did not stop their repressive measures. Even prominent figures from the Palestinian Authority were not spared Israeli humiliation. They cannot move freely among Palestinian towns and villages without the approval of the occupation troops, who insist on maintaining control over everything.

[Humaydi] Palestinian, Arab, and Islamic public opinion is strong, possibly supported by fatwas [religious rulings] issued by some Muslim clergymen, in its denouncement of the recent operations by Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] and Islamic Jihad and the murder of civilians.

[Shalah] We saw the position of the Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim public at the funerals of Martyrs Fathi al-Shaqaqi and Yahya 'Ayyash. About 250,000 people marched at al-Shaqaqi's funeral in al-Yarmuk Camp in Damascus. A similar number of people marched at the funeral of brother Martyr Yahya 'Ayyash in Gaza. Through the masses, our people in the diaspora and inside the territories made their position clear: They support jihad and resistance. On the opposite side, when the self-rule authority wanted to organize a demonstration in Gaza against the jihad operations, it was unable to mass more than a few thousand people, all of whom were employees of the authority's departments or schoolchildren. They marched for less than a kilometer and then dispersed.

I am certain that deep in their hearts, senior authority officials, not only ordinary people, support these operations. But they are shackled by the Oslo tragedy, which they inflicted on themselves and their people.

The fatwas that the enemy leaders and their agents are seeking to have issued, which they insist on and try to promote through the Israeli media, are cause for disgust and anger by any Arab or Muslim who has any honor or any religious or moral feeling, unless, of course, Peres has become one of the people entitled to issue a fatwa concerning our religion and unless the Zionist Labor Party has become one of the Islamic schools of thought that may be followed and whose opinions on Islamic religious laws may be respected.

[Humaydi] The Palestinian Authority televised the confession of an Islamic Jihad member who said that he was planning to carry out a suicide operation and that he was brainwashed by Islamic Jihad officials.

[Shalah] This is a total lie fabricated by some security agencies of the authority that are competing to please the Israelis by suppressing our people. The young man, Rashid Saqr, was forced to say everything that he said. The Authority did not feel any shame when it showed the young man with signs of physical torture evident on his body. The fact that they dictated the answers was clearly evident. When asked a question, the young man was silent for a minute. He then looked at a security man and said "they paid me $6,000 in advance to carry out the operation." This is a cheap lie. Anyone who chooses to die in such a way would not be asking about all the money in the world. If it is an issue of buying and selling, the mujahidin do not sell their life at this price.

[Humaydi] But it is clear that everyone who carried out a martyrdom-seeking operations is in his twenties?

[Shalah] This is normal. Young men are always more zealous and aspiring toward individual heroism. They are more inclined to sacrifice themselves and more able to carry out extraordinary duties, especially if the

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young man is free of family responsibilities and worldly demands.

[Humaydi] You have said that these operations are a political and military necessity. Does this mean that you are carrying out these operations to topple Peres in the next elections?

[Shalah] Our jihad is not linked to the details of Israeli politics. We do not care if the Labor Party or Likud is in power. Both of them are equally bad.

Our jihad is a religious necessity, first of all. My comments on political and military necessity mean that only these kinds of operations are capable of creating a balance of terror between us and our enemy. Our enemy possesses the most up-to-date weapons in the world, and its army is very highly trained. Our people are unarmed, and our capabilities are very limited. We do not have anything to ward off murder and repression except martyrdom, which is easy. It does not cost us anything except our lives. We, as Muslims, cherish death in the cause of God. We are not like the Jews, who cherish life very much.

We have managed to achieve our objectives, while Israel is experiencing a serious security impasse. What can they do to us? Are they threatening us with death? Our youths are competing to die. Martyrs are repeatedly chosen by lot. Israel is in possession of nuclear weapons and is using them to defy the region and the entire world. It is determined to be the only country in possession of such weapons, but it has recently realized that it is powerless in the face of the martyrs' strikes. That is why the United States shipped new military and security equipment to Israel. However, this equipment will not protect Israel, because human bombs are invincible. Even nuclear bombs are powerless over human bombs — that is, if Israel decides to commit suicide.

[Humaydi] How do you obtain the explosives needed to turn human bodies into bombs?

[Shalah] This task is left to the mujahidin on the ground. They have their own methods and ways to acquire weapons.

[Humaydi] After the assassination of al-Shaqaqi, your movement threatened to target Israelis everywhere in the world. Is this threat still valid?

[Shalah] The movement's strategy was to target Israeli targets in Palestine and to focus on the strategic depth of enemy concentrations. The recent Tel Aviv operation emphasized the movement's adherence to this strategy.

[Humaydi] The Islamic Jihad's operation coincided with three operations carried out by Hamas. Is there coordination between the two movements?

[Shalah] There is an understanding and a meeting of the minds with the brothers in Hamas in the trenches of confrontation. We want to promote and enhance this relationship in order to carry out a ferocious war to uphold the Islamic plan in Palestine and the region.

[Humaydi] In some of its statements, Hamas has offered a truce and to halt its operations. Can Islamic Jihad accept a truce with Israel?

[Shalah] I would like to begin by saying that the statement attributed to Hamas on a truce is incorrect. We are not an army engaged in a regular war with another army. As such, we cannot talk of truce or cease-fire for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. We are a resistance movement fighting foreign occupation. The enemy could have used every peaceful day in which there were no military operations to reconsider its aggressive policies and stand. The days on which no military operations are carried out are days of truce. But, to the contrary, whenever military action is halted for a while, the enemy's arrogance increases and the enemy begins to act as if the Palestine question were settled to its advantage. No weapons were used throughout the intifadah. It was a civilian resistance practiced by children, women, and the elderly. How did the enemy react to the intifadah? What are the accomplishments of the intifadah? Can the losing Oslo deal be called an accomplishment of the intifadah? To the enemy and its partners, a truce must result in disarming the resistance and giving the enemy whatever it wants. Consequently, truce is unacceptable to us.

[Humaydi] How long can Islamic Jihad maintain its patience and withstand the blows dealt by the Palestinian Authority and Israel?

[Shalah] It goes without saying that Islamic Jihad is under simultaneous pressure from the authority and the Israeli enemy. Israeli repression is something the mujahidin have gotten used to. But what is regrettable and saddening is the repression meted out by the Palestinian Authority. A poet once wrote: "Injustice meted out by kinsfolk is harder on the heart than the impact of a sharp sword."

We are all certain that the Islamic movement in Palestine and the world at large is the seed of God and that God will look after this seed. Hence, we would like to address the occupiers and their unscrupulous aides with a phrase used by a woman to address al-Hajjaj [an ancient ruler of Iraq known for his tyrannical rule and savagery]. This woman told al-Hajjaj: You are harvesting, and God is sowing seeds. Given God's care for his seeds, your harvest will come to naught. There is another proverb that says: Nothing destroys what God builds.

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[Humaydi] Israel appears to be pushing for a showdown between you and the Authority. It wants to involve the Authority in its row with you. How would you tackle such an eventuality?

[Shalah] We are aware that Israel constantly seeks to foment intra-Palestinian fighting. That is why we are doing our best to avert such an eventuality. We constantly urge our cadres to demonstrate the utmost patience, discipline, and restraint. To us, engaging in internecine fighting is a taboo.

[Humaydi] Even after the Authority killed Islamic Jihad cadres?

[Shalah] When the crime was committed, we told our brothers clearly and forcefully that Palestinian hands carried out the crime. We likened the incident to incidents in which agents were involved. Nonetheless, the decision that prompted the crime directly or indirectly belonged to Israel. No Palestinian interest is served by shedding Palestinian blood. Only Israeli interests are served by such a thing. We must focus on striking at the head of the snake. We should not allow ourselves to be dragged into sedition that will destroy everything.

[Humaydi] Has the dialogue started between Islamic Jihad and the authority before the recent operations been brought to a halt?

[Shalah] The dialogue with the authority concerned the criminal assassination of brothers 'Ammar al-A'raj and Ayman al-Razayinah at the hands of the authority's security men. This dialogue was halted before the recent wave of operations. The halt was prompted by the fact that the authority broke its promise to form a committee to investigate the crime. We had accepted the idea of forming a committee, even though we believed that the incident was clear and in no need of any investigation. We demonstrated wisdom and patience. But the authority showed procrastination and arrogance to cover up the murderers.

[Humaydi] Against this background, how can you convince Islamic Jihad cadres, whose enthusiasm has driven them to blow themselves up, to refrain from carrying out acts of violence against the Authority?

[Shalah] We are applying the utmost pressure on our cadres and asking them to show restraint. But this is not easy. It is not easy to convince youths willing to carry out martyrdom operations to vindicate their people's dignity and their nation's pride to tolerate the humiliation, repression, and murders carried out against the people by the authority. What I fear most is individual incidents by indignant and persecuted youths. Nevertheless, we trust our brothers' awareness and honesty.

[Humaydi] Hamas, through its representative in Lebanon, Mustafa al-Liddawi, warned that it can kill President Yasir 'Arafat if it wants. Reports have circulated to the effect that you are coordinating with Hamas to liquidate Palestinian Authority officials. Are you planning to assassinate 'Arafat and other Palestinian figures?

[Shalah] This is untrue. We oppose political assassination as a way to resolve problems. Even with regard to handling agents and suspects during the years of the intifadah, we were the most cautious. We have no quarrel with individuals per se. Our dispute is with a certain course of action and a certain political line. Emphasis must be placed on opposing this course of action and this political line so that we can adopt an alternate course of action and a different political line—a course of action and a political line capable of restoring our usurped rights.

[Humaydi] What is this course of action you are talking about?

[Shalah] It is definitely the course of struggle, jihad, and martyrdom chosen by our people and constantly pursued by our nation against conquerors.

[Humaydi] The PLO tried this path before, but it failed. Now it is walking the path of negotiations. Why are you not giving negotiations a chance to restore some of these rights. Isn't something better than nothing?

[Shalah] Israel is an illegitimate entity created by military might, usurpation, and terror. What kind of settlement can be achieved by reaching an understanding with it? The PLO was not defeated militarily. It was defeated politically. Political defeat and resignation to a policy of abandonment is what led to the renunciation and condemnation of armed struggle and to the pursuit of those engaged in it to the enemy's advantage, as is happening nowadays, without obtaining anything in return. What does the PLO views as better than nothing? What did the advocates of settlement achieve? What is the enemy promising them? With a state subservient to Israel and seeking to protect its security on 10 percent of Palestine's territory? Israel knows nothing except the language of force. This is the mind-set of aggressors who plunder others' territory. Even in the negotiations, Israel acts with the utmost arrogance. This is because there can be no real negotiations between a victor and a vanquished party, between a strong party and a weak one. In such negotiations, there is a forcing of dictates by one side on the other. Acting from a position of strength, the victor forces his dictates, and the vanquished and weak party accepts the dictates and implements them. The weak party has no choice but to do so or beg the judge, who is also the adversary .

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At any rate, we are the champions of rights. We seek to restore our rights by all means. Had there been a real opportunity for peace, the pursuit of peace would have been easier and simpler for us. Are we to be faulted? Well, our enemy usurped our land by force and continued to disavow our rights and threaten our security and safety by all aggressive means. It is seeking to force its own version of peace on us, a peace designed to ensure only its own security. Should we then keep silent or use force to regain our rights and establish peace in our homeland?

[Humaydi] How do you define real peace? Are you seeking a peace that ensures the security of both the Palestinians and Israelis at the same time, and not just that of the Israelis?

[Shalah] I have not said that. A Jew cannot feel secure unless he returns to the country in which he was born and lived before he usurped our homeland, Palestine. In my opinion, real peace is peace that will reverse aggression and end the injustice meted out against us by the usurpation of our lands. Our lands must be returned to us. For peace to become a reality, the state of affairs in our land must be returned to what it was before the conspiratorial occupation of Palestine and the uprooting and displacement of its people. Anything else will only perpetuate the farcical Israeli peace and aggravate tension.

[Humaydi] Do you believe that the balance of power does not allow for this and that Israel is now a fact of life that the international community cannot allow to disappear or be dismembered?

[Shalah] First, the balance of power is not firm. The future political map of the new world order is highly fluid. The United States is currently holding sway, but this will not continue, especially if we realize that economics has become the most important factor in determining the international balance of power in the post-Cold War era. The assessment of the World Bank and many international and Western government institutions confirmed that the PRC will be the most powerful state in 20 years, not to mention the rest of the Asian nations, including Japan, and the EU, with the possibility of achieving a full-blown European unity. To our chagrin, Israel is promoting its ties with all these nations. It aims to ensure its future relations with these resurgent big powers. If it were to lose the support of the United States, it would find a substitute sponsor.

The worst scenario is for Israel to foster its security by involving itself with the people of the region. This is the essence of Peres' idea of a new Middle Eastern order. He wants Israel to be part of the region's fabric. The people of the region are meant to foot the bill for this large settler entity.

We will not recognize this reality. We will resist it by all means. Israel must recognize the facts regarding its estrangement and isolation in the region, even though rulers and governments have recognized it. It must realize that what it and the West calls Islamic terrorism is an awakening of the nation, which began to rehabilitate its identity and prepare for liberation and renaissance. What kind of future is Israel anticipating in this region? In 20 years, the Arab population will exceed 500 million, and the population of the Middle East dreamt of by Shim'on Peres will exceed 750 million, 90 percent of whom will be Muslims — that is, potential suicide bombers ready to fight Israel.

Why is it impossible for the so-called free world to allow for a change in this wrongful state of affairs to return rights to their lawful owners, even if force is to be used to achieve this goal? Did the world accept the realities Germany created in Europe in World War II? Would, for example, the residents of Washington, Paris, or London accept expulsion from their lands to make room for the Jews persecuted in Germany? The PRC expressed its determination to uphold its sovereignty over Taiwan, even if it risks igniting a world war. I wonder what rationale the international community is advancing to defend the existence of Israel and justify the crimes it is committing. The establishment of Israel on the debris of another people is a black spot and a stigma on the face of the contemptible civilization of the 20th century.

[Humaydi] Do you not think that by ending the state of war and by achieving peace and coexistence in the region, the people of the region can save many of the resources that are squandered in conflicts and then direct them to construction and development to achieve security, stability, and prosperity for everybody?

[Shalah] This is the recipe of Shim'on Peres and the World Bank. This recipe is for cheap consumption by people who have no memory or who act like parrots. The squandering of resources in conflicts is not the nation's problem. How many years have passed while these regimes and governments, which promote such arguments, did not enter war with Israel? Where is the development they achieved? The matter is much more complicated. The nation's battle for development against backwardness cannot be separated from its battle against foreign occupation, or from the battle against suppression and repression to achieve freedom, or the battle for unity against division, or the battle to preserve its identity against westernization and the distortion of culture and civilization. These issues cannot be sepa-

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rated. Israel will benefit from any settlement because it is now fighting a war and is exhausting millions of dollars, which it obtains from the U.S. people, some of whom are homeless. Israel will save all these resources, if they continue to flow. The opportunities that will open for it in the region will make it reap great benefits. The Arabs will not gain any benefit from Israel, because its plan is to become the strongest economic base in the region and will deal with the economies of the region on the basis of competition and not integration as it claims.

When we talk about security and prosperity for everybody, then we must say what do we mean by everybody. Does this include the Palestinian people? There are some 1 million Palestinians living as citizens inside Israel and everybody knows their conditions. How would peace alter these conditions? There are some 2.5 million in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. What does Peres' peace hold for them? Additionally, there are more than 4 million Palestinians in the diaspora, who, the governments of the region say, are guests and who are deprived from the most basic rights which people enjoy in their countries. Would coexistence involve these people and solve their problems, or are they not human beings?

[Humaydi] So you reject any kind of peace or coexistence with Israel?

[Shalah] Is this shameful, wrong, or forbidden? I believe that peace with Israel is impossible to achieve for many reasons, some relate to Israel and the Jews, some relate to us as an Arab and Muslim nation. Let met speak briefly about those reasons that concern Israel. The Koran says that the Jews do not keep promises or respect agreements. Is it not the case that every time they make a covenant, some party among them throw it aside? [Koranic verse] They are not pleased by any other people unless they turn them into slaves in whichever way they can. Do you know that the American people are slaves to Israel, which lives at the expense of the U.S. taxpayer. There is also the aggressive nature of Israel as an entity established on murder, aggression, and terrorism and it cannot continue without that. The origin of the conflict in the region is Palestine. Palestine and Israel are two opposites and they cannot live with each other. It is impossible to combine them, as it is impossible to combine day and night.

[Humaydi] Do you believe that in spite of all obstacles, the peace train in the region will move forward and reach the terminal?

[Shalah] I believe there are two trains in the region now. The Israeli peace train and the train of Islam. They are in a race although they move in opposite directions. The first wants to drag the nation toward defeat and complete capitulation to the Zionist-U.S. will. The second train wants to take the nation to the shores of liberation and resurgence. If escalation in the region continues as it is now, the two trains will collide head on and the big explosion will inevitably take place.

[Humaydi] It appears that most Arab countries reject harming Israel's security and stability. They demonstrated this when they attended the Sharm al-Shaykh summit which convened under the slogan of peacemaking or combating terrorism. How do you view the results of this conference and the impact it may have on your military operations against Israel?

[Shalah] First, the nation did not attend the summit. It was an Israeli-U.S. show to rescue Peres and 'Arafat. It was also an election ploy for Clinton. It was not for making peace or combating terrorism. It was held to provide Israel with a cover for its terrorism and crimes which it started to carry out immediately after the conference ended. These crimes consist of the demolition of houses, to be followed by deportations, and the assassination of our people. The summit was held to garner more material and moral support for the Zionists who were frightened by the martyrdom-seeking operations. No matter what the results of the conference, these results will not stop our people from pursuing the march of jihad and martyrdom with determination and caution.

[Humaydi] Do you believe that there is Islamic terrorism in the region targeting innocent people in countries like Egypt, Algeria, and Bahrain and threatening stability in the region, and that this calls for international and regional cooperation to confront it?

[Shalah] If the Sharm al-Shaykh summit represents this regional cooperation to confront what they call terrorism, I affirm that it was not held to protect Egypt or Algeria. Violence in these countries is not new. It is now less than what it was in the past. Why did they not hold this summit before? Why did they not hold a summit to halt the massacre of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina or in Chechnya? Explosions took place in Oklahoma, Paris, and London. Why did they not hold a summit after these explosions to combat terrorism? This conference is to protect Israel and an attempt to establish a security and intelligence alliance under Israel to confront the Islamists.

[Humaydi] But Iran welcomed the operations and attacked the Sharm al-Shaykh summit?

[Shalah] The issue is not whether one supports these operations, remains silent on them, or denounces them. The question is whether one is ready to see the world through Shim'on Peres' eyes. Therefore, all those

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supporting the Palestinian people in their struggle to regain their rights and freedom, and those refusing to submit to Israel's will are targeted by the United States and Israel. Iran, Syria, Libya, and Sudan are targeted. All those who reject Israeli-U.S. hegemony on the region are targeted and there is a price on their heads by the new world order headed by the United States. Does anyone believe what they say?

[Humaydi] How can Syria which participates in the peace process be a target?

[Shalah] Syria participates in the peace process but it refuses to submit to the Israeli conditions and to the U.S. pressure and blackmail. Syria refused to attend the Sharm al-Shaykh summit because it understands peace as meaning the regaining of its occupied territories and not joining an Israeli-U.S. alliance for confronting all those who carry out legitimate resistance against the occupation.

[Humaydi] How true is the report published by the U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT magazine that the Syrian authorities arrested two Israeli Mosad agents who played a role in the assassination of Dr. al-Shaqaqi and that one of them infiltrated the Islamic Jihad Movement?

[Shalah] This is an unsubstantiated newspaper report and a rumor concocted by media with links to international and regional intelligence services.

[Humaydi] Where did the investigations into the assassination of Dr. al-Shaqaqi lead?

[Shalah] The case is not yet closed, but this subject cannot be discussed with the media.

[Humaydi] Did you reach any results, even initial results, that incriminate any party?

[Shalah] The initial and final result, which does not need any effort to prove, is that it was Israel which assassinated Dr. Fathi.

[Humaydi] Are there any other parties involved in one way or another?

[Shalah] What do you mean?

[Humaydi] Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat said that al-Shaqaqi was handed over to his murderers.

[Shalah] If he has anything to confirm that, then why does he not reveal it?

[Humaydi] Where does the Alliance of Palestinian Forces [the 10-faction alliance] stand in the battle between Hamas and the Islamic Jihad on the one hand, and Israel and the Palestinian Authority on the other?

[Shalah] The Alliance of Palestinian Forces is there, but, regrettably, it is ineffective.

[Humaydi] Why so?

[Shalah] There are many reasons; historical, ideological, political, and organizational reasons. There are many factors involved which cause the alliance to stand still, fall back, and not rise to the level of the onslaught against our people and cause.

[Humaydi] How do you view the attitude of some factions within the alliance which expressed their readiness to return home and work from within the Oslo deal?

[Shalah] They are free to do so. There is a moral commitment to a certain mode of action agreed to by the parties to the alliance. Whoever chooses to depart from this is free to do so. But he will bear the moral and ethical responsibility for this. We do not compel people to work against their convictions.

[Humaydi] Some members of the alliance have condemned the recent operations.

[Shalah] I have not heard of any condemnation by any member of the alliance. Even if there had been a real condemnation of these operations, we are not ready to engage in arguments and counterarguments with anybody.

[Humaydi] Israel insists on the revocation of some or all articles of the Palestinian National Charter. Where do you stand on this issue?

[Shalah] We have our reservations on some articles of the National Charter. Nonetheless, we are opposed to amending or revoking it to appease Israel. In practical terms, the Oslo team acted in violation of the National Charter and all constants of our people and nation, which confirm our right to our homeland, Palestine. But, I would like to note that the revocation of the charter will not resolve Israel's problem. This is because Israel's quarrel is not with the National Charter, but with the Koran, which is our people's and nation's divine charter. Can Israel revoke the Koran?

[Humaydi] Do you believe that the peace process will collapse under the strikes of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hizballah?

[Shalah] Given the current circumstances, it is hard to predict the collapse of the ongoing peace process. But, this process will not succeed either. The duel between us and our enemies will continue. In the course of this duel, both sides will continue to score points, without delivering the knockout blow.

[Humaydi] Where will this situation lead?

[Shalah] This situation will continue until the masses of the obscured and persecuted nation awaken and get

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involved in the conflict to express their opposition to this Israeli-U.S. peace, which obliterates the nation's past, destroys its present, and confiscates its future.

Egypt

Egypt: Radio Highlights Perry's Denial of Secret Pact With Israel

NC0304151996 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 1230 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Husni Mubarak this morning received U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry and his accompanying delegation. The meeting was attended by Field Marshal Muhammad Husayn Tantawi, minister of defense and war production; and the U.S. ambassador in Cairo.

Following the meeting, Perry described his talks with President Mubarak as excellent, adding that Egypt and the United States will continue their security cooperation and strong commitment to the peace process and stability in the Middle East. He added that he had expressed his country's appreciation for President Mubarak's role in promoting the peace process, as demonstrated by his call for and hosting of the summit of peacemakers in Sharm al-Shaykh last month.

Perry added that their discussion focused on threats against the region's stability, as well as security ties between Egypt and the United States, which were and will continue to be strong for long years to come. Perry stressed that the United States views Egypt as the region's keystone state for building a lasting peace in the Middle East and achieving greater stability in Africa.

The U.S. Defense Secretary denied the existence of any cooperation between Israel and the United States in the field of nuclear weapons. He added that the United States will continue to supply Egypt with security aid so that it could preserve its security and continue its leadership to build regional peace and stability.

Regarding terrorism, Perry said that they had discussed terrorist threats, which seek to halt the peace process, something that would affect all the region's countries, including Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Syria, and all parties. For this reason, terrorist operations must not be allowed to stop the peace process. He added that the Sharm al-Shaykh summit was extremely important in moving forward and giving impetus to the peace process. The Palestinians and Israelis recently resumed their talks on how to activate the peace process, he added. He stressed that it is a hard problem, but some progress was made last week.

Perry added that he had discussed with President Mubarak ways to establish more effective Egyptian-U.S. cooperation in the face of terrorist threats. Cooperation with other states in this regard was also discussed, he added.

Regarding President Mubarak's call to free the Middle East of weapons of mass destruction and Israel's refusal to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Perry said that the United States favors the universality of the treaty and that there are countries in the Middle East that are trying to develop nuclear weapons, such as Iran and Iraq. The United States, he added, is trying to stop these programs, which pose a threat to regional security. The U.S. Defense Secretary said that any regional program to eliminate nuclear weapons has to be comprehensive and include all these countries.

On Egyptian-U.S. military cooperation and future U.S. aid to Egypt, Perry said that this issue will be discussed during the talks with Defense Minister Field Marshal Tantawi to examine the continued cooperation between Egypt and the United States. He added that the U.S. aid to Egypt reached $1.3 billion and included F-16's, frigates, and the joint manufacturing of tanks. This program, he added, is an active program that has a good future.

Asked if the United States could balance its strategic cooperation agreement with Israel and its ties with the Arab states and whether this was discussed with President Mubarak, the U.S. Defense Secretary said: There have been media reports on some kind of a secret defense pact between the United States and Israel. He stressed that this is not true. He added that it is not new that the U.S. is committed to Israel's security, but at the same time it is also not new that the United States is committed to stability and peace in the region. He added that the United States is committed to the security of its allies the region, including Egypt, and that any regional security considerations have to include Egypt as well as Israel. He reiterated his emphasis that there is no secret defense pact between Israel and the United States.

Egypt: U.S. Defense Secretary Perry's Departure Reported

NC0404072296 Cairo MENA in English 0612 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, Apr 4 (MENA)—American Secretary of Defense William Perry left here this morning for home winding up a two-day visit to Egypt.

Perry held talks with Minister of Defense and Military Production Field Marshal Muhammad Husayn Tantawi

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on military cooperation between Egypt and the United States. Perry also met with President Husni Mubarak.

Egypt: Mubarak Discusses Peace, Topical Issues

NC0304175796 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1700 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] London, 3 Apr (MENA)—President Husni Mubarak has stated that there is no crisis in Egypt's relations with the United States or Israel. He said that we use logic in addressing affairs with both the Americans and Israelis. In an interview with the Lebanese London-based magazine Al-HAWADITH to be published tomorrow, President Mubarak said that evidence of Egypt's Arab affiliation is not needed. He called on the Arab countries to maintain and strengthen the Arab League and to rally around it because it is the home of Arabs and the body that combines the Arab nation.

President Mubarak said that the Middle Easternism proposed by certain parties is made up of ideas that we hear about occasionally and anyone who wants to propagate it is free to do so. President Mubarak warned of the danger of nuclear leakage from the Israeli reactor in Dimona in the Negev desert. He said that if reports on the nuclear leakage are true, it will be a very serious issue for the entire region and might lead to more dangerous disasters than the Chernobyl reactor. He said that Egypt is seeking to verify the reports and in light of this "we reflect as we handle this issue."

Regarding reports in the Israeli papers that the proposed draft defense agreement between Israel and the United States provides for a U.S. pledge that Washington will protect the Israeli nuclear arsenal even after peace agreements are signed with the Arabs, President Mubarak said we have no information to this effect and stressed that Egypt is entirely against this issue. He noted that the United States supports the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons and it is illogical not to approve of making the Middle East region free of weapons of mass destruction. He said that it is unreasonable to exclude Israel, otherwise the United States will oppose the principles that it seeks to apply and entrench in the international arena. He pointed out that this is inconsistent with the new realities and balance imposed by peace in which the United States plays a vital role.

Responding to a question on the existence of secret clauses in the defense agreement between Israel and the United States, President Mubarak said: We are seeking to obtain precise information on this issue and I have no information other than that published in newspapers.

Discussing the results of the Sharm al-Shaykh summit of peacemakers, which ended with Israel obtaining the lions's share, President Mubarak said that it is not true that the summit only served Israeli interests. He stressed that had it not been for this summit, the entire peace process would have collapsed. He noted that Israel attended this summit, as did the Arabs, and anyone who wants to exploit the results of the summit has a right to do so and that he could not prevent anyone from doing so. However, he said: If anyone wants to exploit this summit and transform all its results in Israel's interests, we will oppose him. He said that the Sharm al-Shaykh summit statement noted basic support for the peace process and providing security and spoke of terrorism in general terms because it threatens the peace process. He stressed that security at the summit was totally Egyptian, noting that Egypt had previously succeeded in providing security for huge international conferences in terms of the delegations and countries participating, such as the African summit conference and the population conference. He stressed that every place in Egypt is secure and that security prevails throughout Egypt.

Asked about Israel's tight security measures against the Palestinians and the Lebanese in the south following the Sharm al-Shaykh summit, President Mubarak said: Israel would have done the same even if there were no summit. He pointed out that Egypt called for holding the summit to save the peace process and as part of an international mobilization at the highest level. He stressed the need to activate the Palestinian issue and the peace process.

President Mubarak expected terrorist operations to occur so long as peace has not taken its full course. He noted that there are forces that will always seek to impede the peace process, and they could be Arab, Israeli, Iranian, or any other forces.

He pointed out that the Sharm al-Shaykh summit placed the peace process as well as the obstacles on the Palestinian track at the center of international attention and halted the deterioration in the peace process. President Mubarak added that Egypt's stance regarding the Israeli siege against the Palestinians is clear. This siege, he emphasized, does not serve the cause of peace, for with a siege peace does not gain more supporters.

President Mubarak noted that Egypt is in touch with the Israelis and Americans about the Israeli siege against the Palestinians and that the follow-up committee of the Sharm al-Shaykh summit is interested in this issue and is committed to the peace process. He added: I do not believe that the United States will side with one party at the expense of the other.

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Asked about Egypt's role in activating the regional peace talks following the recent suicide operations in Israel, President Husni Mubarak said that Egypt is in constant touch with the Americans and Israelis. He expressed his belief that the negotiations will resume again within two months.

Asked if it is in the Arabs' interest to eliminate Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] and the Islamic Jihad, do without them, or use them to pressure Israel, President Mubarak said that these are terrorist, not Islamic, groups that are financed from abroad, and hence comes the danger. They act against the interests of the Arab and Islamic nations, he added.

Regarding the situation in Iraq, President Mubarak said that we know that the Iraqi people's conditions are hard. We hope to find a solution to ease the Iraqi people's suffering.

Turning to the current crisis with Sudan and the fact that the deadline set by the Security Council for Sudan to hand over the terrorists is nearing, President Mubarak said: We do not want to punish the Sudanese people. We want the Security Council to search for a way to force the ruling regime in Sudan to comply with its resolutions, and the regime has to search for a way to respond to the international resolutions. He added that the Sudanese ruling regime had previously handed over international terrorist Carlos to France, so why can they not hand over the defendants in the Addis Ababa incident? He emphasized that Egypt and Sudan are linked by strong and eternal ties.

Asked if the Arab states could refuse to apply the international embargo on Libya and if Egypt could take the initiative in this regard, President Mubarak said: This simply means that we would all have to walk out of the UN. He asked: Would this be right? He added that the UN is an international organization whose resolutions we must respect. We as Arabs benefit from its active international role and rely on the will of the international community, as represented by the UN resolutions, to resolve many of our issues.

Regarding Egyptian-Syrian relations and whether Syria and Lebanon will one day bless what was decided at the Sharm al-Shaykh summit, President Mubarak noted that he had talked to President al-Asad about this, and al-Asad told him that Syria supports the peace process and is against and condemns terrorism. Mubarak described Egyptian-Syrian relations as very strong and solid.

In response to another question about Egyptian-Saudi relations, President Mubarak described them as excellent.

In response to a question on his view of the current situation in Lebanon and its future, President Mubarak said that Lebanon has joined the peace process and that there is agreement between Lebanon and Syria that both tracks should proceed in tandem. He added that we may all recall that at the outset, the four peace tracks—Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian, and Jordanian—proceeded in tandem.

On Israel's withdrawal from the Golan heights and south Lebanon, President Mubarak stressed that Egypt acts in coordination with all Arab and international parties to implement the UN resolutions on all fronts. He said that our efforts focus on Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, including southern Lebanon.

Responding to a question on the flow of U.S. security aid to Israel and its impact on Washington as a mediator between the Arabs and Israelis, President Mubarak said that Israel has a special status in the United States and has a strong lobby there, noting that the U.S. aid to Tel Aviv will continue.

President Mubarak answered a number of questions on domestic issues, primarily the professional associations, the press law, privatization, the economic reform program, the opposition parties, the housing law, the hijacking of the Egyptian airliner flying from Luxor to Cairo, and terrorism. Replying to a question on the hijacking of the Egyptian airliner, President Mubarak stressed that there are no political considerations behind this incident.

Discussing what happened at certain professional associations, President Mubarak said that what happened at the lawyers association concerns the judiciary and that the government has nothing to do with it and that the same thing applies to the engineers association.

Discussing the journalists association, President Mubarak said that what happened is that the penal code has been amended and that the journalists objected to preventive detention. We saw that if the Constitution permits this, we will address the issue through a new law. He stressed that the new press law was made in accordance with his own personal proposal and out of concern for freedom of the press.

In response to a question on the fate of the press law in Egypt, President Mubarak said that everyone can be assured about the freedom of the press and he supports the journalists for the sake of democracy and freedom. He added that he will strive to entrench committed democracy and not infringe on the rights and inviolability of others without evidence in favor of society's interests.

President Mubarak was told that Egypt treats the moderate Islamic currents, which condemn terrorism, and the

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extremist currents equally. President Mubarak said: The moderate current is the entire Egyptian people. As for those who claim to be the custodians of Islam, they are a minority with no qualifications, and this custodianship is alien to Islam.

Asked about the stumbling of the program to sell the public sector and if some obstacles are the reason for this, President Mubarak denied this, saying that the privatization process has started, that there will be no retraction from it, and that it is proceeding in carefully calculated steps. President Mubarak emphasized that the state is eager to provide care for the workers and not to ruin their lives, adding that privatization is being conducted in a way that suits the nature of society, so that no worker may be harmed.

President Mubarak was asked: It is being said that the IMF is in control of Egypt's financial destiny. President Mubarak expressed regret about this talk, adding that the economic reform program is 100 percent Egyptian and that Egypt does not accept to be the subject of external custodianship by any party whatsoever. He emphasized that the IMF does not interfere in Egypt's economic policy. He added: We want privatization because it serves our interests.

Asked about the status of the Egyptian opposition parties and reports that the government is placing obstacles before them, President Mubarak emphasized that the opposition parties act freely and their newspapers publish what they want. He noted that the status of these parties is sound and is governed by the Constitution and law. He added: They have to work and establish a presence in the street. They need to convince the people of their programs and to put forward proposals and solutions instead of their constant criticism, he added.

Regarding the Arab Journalists Union's decision to return its headquarters to Cairo, President Mubarak said that this is the natural thing to do. The union, he added, corrected itself, in accordance with its bylaws, not to mention the fact that Egypt is the biggest Arab country and has a press, media, and writers. President Mubarak stressed that Egypt has no ambition and respects the independence of the institutions that operate on its territory. Egypt does not use the professional associations or intellectual gatherings to act against any Arab country, he added.

Asked about the new draft law on housing, President Mubarak said that before the existing law is amended the people's opinion will be sought through hearings, so that the law may be balanced, acceptable to the people, and may not benefit one side and harm the other. He added that the draft law will be presented to the parties and people before it is referred to the People's Assembly for endorsement.

Egypt: Al-Baz Voices Support for Sanctions on Sudanese Regime

NC0404060996 Cairo MENA in Arabic
2237 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 3 Apr (MENA)—Dr. Usamah al-Baz, first Foreign Ministry under secretary and director of the President's Office for Political Affairs, stressed that Egypt cares about the Sudanese people and its interests and will oppose any sanctions that harm it.

In a statement tonight al-Baz said that Egypt supports sanctions on the official state because the case concerns an attack on a head of state and the undermining of Egypt's national security.

Al-Baz called on the Sudanese regime to hand over to Ethiopia the three defendants accused in the assassination attempt so as to avoid the sanctions that will be imposed on it. He stressed that the three defendants are still inside Sudan.

Egypt: Al-Baz on Prospects for Arab Unity, Middle East Market

NC0404072396 Cairo MENA in Arabic
2240 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 3 Apr (MENA)—Dr. Usamah al-Baz, first Foreign Ministry under secretary and director of the President's Office for Political Affairs, has stated that he hopes the next century will see the Arab countries believing more in the importance of unity and less in Arab groupings, which will gradually disappear.

At a meeting with Arab intellectuals during the closing session of the first annual conference organized by the Arab Center for Strategic Studies held here tonight, al-Baz said: We should seriously think of strengthening the Arab League so as to increase its effectiveness and abilities on the regional and international levels. He added: Arab unity will be an issue of life or death for us, since others are moving along these lines, even though they do not have much to unite them, such as language, history, religion, land, and joint interests.

He noted that the expected unity will not be a merger. Arabs, he said, will display congruity and joint positions on major issues, such as security and dealings with non-Arabs in the region and regional and international economic entities, and a situation will be reached after achieving an Arab mechanism for containing inter-Arab differences and resolving border disputes.

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Dr. al-Baz ruled out the establishment of a Middle East market anytime soon, saying this is an Israeli proposal and the Arabs are not ready to enter into it now. He added: Before thinking of a Middle East market, we, the Arabs, must have a united view of strategic and political interests and must have made great strides toward economic unity.

He called on the Arab countries to implement the economic cooperation agreements and the joint Arab defense pact. He also called for real Arab peace initiatives without resorting to slogans and said there must be an Arab concept for turning the Arab-Israeli conflict into peace in the region.

Dr. al-Baz noted that the existence of Israel has become a fait accompli and that it is difficult to remove it from the region. He said: There is a need for coexistence and we, the Arabs, must think of the peace culture. He noted: The Arab culture is rich and strong enough to make it survive and thrive

He called on Arab intellectuals to help the decisionmakers in the Arab world by presenting focused working papers containing specific proposals for the problems, not simply research. He stressed that the intellectuals should not think there is hostility between them and authority and should be objective in analyzing issues.

Egypt: Al-Alfi Denies Torture of Detainees, Yemeni Conditions

NC0304163396 Cairo MENA in English 1445 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, April 3 (MENA) — Interior Minister Hasan al-Alfi denied that Yemen linked the extradition of the Egyptian terrorists in Yemen to Egypt's handing over to the Yemeni authorities the Yemeni opposition figures living in Egypt.

Interviewed by Friday's [5 April] issue of 'AL-MUSAWWAR' weekly magazine, al-Alfi said the security agreement signed by Egypt and Yemen on Sunday during the Yemeni president's visit to Egypt is all-embracing as it covers the different security fields and the exchange of know-how.

On the truth about detentions and torture in Egypt, the interior minister blamed the human rights organizations as the main source of the problem, noting that their voice has been high-pitched over the recent period after the disappearance of the terrorist activities.

Egypt maintains human rights most, he stressed, adding that he has all the documents that testify to this fact.

However, he stated that there were some excesses by individuals who are sent for trial as per the law.

Egypt: Mubarak Receives Tunisia's Karoui; Committee Meeting Begins

NC0304162796 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 1230 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] President Husni Mubarak this morning received Tunisian Prime Minister Dr. Hamed Karoui at the presidential office in Heliopolis. The meeting was attended by Prime Minister Dr. Kamal al-Janzuri, the Egyptian ambassador in Tunis, and the Tunisian ambassador in Cairo.

Dr. Karoui said after the meeting that he had conveyed to Mubarak greetings from Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, noting that the Tunisian president is eager to consolidate ties with Egypt. He added: I listened carefully to President Mubarak's comprehensive views on bilateral ties and regional and international issues of mutual interest. We also reviewed the outcome of the preparatory talks for the Higher Joint Committee meeting and the items on its agenda. [passage omitted]

The meeting of the Egyptian-Tunisian Higher Joint Committee opened at the prime minister's office in Cairo today. The committee is cochaired by Prime Minister Dr. Kamal al-Janzuri and Tunisian Prime Minister Dr. Hamed Karoui. The committee discussed ways to strengthen economic cooperation, increase trade, and boost investment in both countries.

At the beginning of the meeting, Dr. al-Janzuri welcomed the Tunisian prime minister and his delegation, praising Egyptian-Tunisian relations. He noted that bilateral economic and cultural ties will be further strengthened in the coming stage.

Dr. Karoui made a speech in which he underlined the strong relations between President Mubarak and Ben Ali and between the Egyptian and Tunisian peoples. [passage omitted]

Egypt: PRC Official Meets Musa, Comments on Talks

NC0304141696 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1240 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 3 Apr (MENA)—Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa today received Tian Zing [as transliterated], Chinese first deputy foreign minister, and his accompanying delegation, who are currently visiting Egypt. Ambassador Sayyid Abu-Zayd, assistant to the foreign minister for Asian affairs, also attended the meeting. After the meeting, the Chinese official said that he conveyed to Musa greetings from Qian Qichen, the PRC state council vice chairman and foreign minister [title as received]. He noted that he mentioned to Musa the importance of holding a ceremony this year

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to mark the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the PRC and Egypt. He said that bilateral relations enhanced excellent cooperation in political, economic, trade, cultural, military, and technological spheres. He said that during the meeting he pointed out the importance of strengthening trade cooperation between the two countries to the same level as political relations between the two leaderships.

The Chinese official said that the talks also dealt with the Middle East issue and he stressed that the PRC fully supports the peace process in the Middle East. He expressed his hope that all the parties concerned will exert joint efforts to overcome the obstacles that obstruct comprehensive development in all regional countries. He said that agreement was reached to continue consultations between the foreign ministries of the two countries.

In response to a question on whether the talks dealt with the situation in East Asia, particularly the Tiawan problem, the PRC official said that the talks did not touch on this issue in detail, but noted that the PRC thanks the Egyptian Government for its stance in support of a unified China.

Egypt: Commentary Views Significance of Mubarak-al-Asad Summit

NC0304170296 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 1240 GMT 3 Apr 96

[Commentary by 'Atif 'Umar: "The Significance of the Egyptian-Syrian Summit"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The summit meeting between Presidents Mubarak and al-Asad in Damascus yesterday came at an important time. Several reasons necessitated the holding of this meeting and with such speed. The first is the tension in Palestinian-Israeli and Syrian-Israeli relations. Since the Sharm al-Shaykh summit, Gaza and the West Bank have been under Israeli siege. This entails serious dangers that portend an explosion by the entire Palestinian people. [passage omitted]

The three operations in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Ashqelon carried out by members of Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement], which Israel is not denying it was behind establishing, has put the peace process off course and posed a threat to security, whether in Israel or in the free areas. In addition, the angry reactions that followed these incidents have led to a halt in the peace talks that were supposed to be held between Israeli and Syrian teams to reach points of agreement that would lead to a peace treaty, similar to those concluded between Israel and Egypt, the Palestinians, and Jordan.

Another reason for the two leaders' summit, and extensive talks in Damascus, is the fact that some reports have suggested that a nuclear leak took place in the Israeli Dimona reactor and that wastes from this reactor have been buried underground. Perhaps this is the most important reason for the summit. If these reports prove true, this issue foreshadows a regional disaster similar to that of the Soviet Chernobyl reactor, where a radioactive leak disfigured thousands of Russians and damaged several crops in several adjacent European countries. Thus, if the Syrian-Israeli talks have stopped, this is a temporary issue related to certain circumstances that can be understood at the present time. However, the nuclear leak in the Dimona reactor poses a threat to the entire region, because of the region's relatively small area as well as the proximity of the borders of regional countries.

President Mubarak was farsighted and prudent in his call before the European Parliament in 1986 to free the Middle East of nuclear weapons and all types of weapons of mass destruction, for he wanted real peace for the Middle East and its peoples. [passage omitted]

The Egyptian-Syrian summit has underlined the following facts:

1. Peace is a firm and strategic policy pursued by all Arab peoples and that there is no going back on the peace process, which Egypt started in Camp David.

2. The Arab states' national interests and rights do not conflict with the national interests and rights of each Arab state separately. Thus, Egypt did not and will not interfere in any Arab action that may serve the national interests of a sisterly state.

3. The consultations and coordination between Arab leaders will continue to back Arab endeavors and preserve the peoples' right to stability and security.

4. The question of a radioactive or nuclear leak, the burial of wastes underground, and what this entails in terms of threats to the regional countries must be confronted internationally, so that the Egyptian call to free the Middle East of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, may succeed. This is because failure to treat this matter seriously will jeopardize peace.

Egypt: Papers Comment on Nuclear Weapons, Peace

NC0404074196 Cairo MENA in Arabic 0600 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 4 Apr (MENA)—Today's Cairo newspapers concentrated their headlines on and

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dedicated their first pages to what President Husni Mubarak said in a comprehensive interview with the Lebanese magazine AL-HAWADITH. He said the vital U.S. role in the Middle East peace process is not in line with reports about its protection of the Israeli nuclear arsenal.

The newspapers also concentrated on President Mubarak's words: We have no information about secret articles in the U.S.-Israeli agreement. We reject Israel's exclusion from the nuclear ban.

The newspapers paid attention to President Mubarak's statements on Sudan, highlighting his remarks that Egypt does not want to punish the Sudanese people and that Khartoum must implement the international resolutions.

AL-AHRAM chief editor Ibrahim Nafi's weekly column in AL-AHRAM discussed the Israeli nuclear arsenal. Under the headline "The Peace of Nuclear Fear or the Peace of Justice and Security," he said:

At a time when we are talking about a new Middle East based on growth, economic cooperation, and development of resources and terminating the sources of violence and backwardness; at a time when we are holding multilateral talks and economic summits and establishing partnerships with Europe, a regional side — Israel — establishes grand defense pacts. This automatically pushes the other sides toward attempting to create defense pacts to confront Israel. It divides the region into competing defense pacts, thus creating greater tension, increasing the possibility of clashes and violence, and returning the region to an atmosphere of Arab-Israeli war.

The writer added that establishing this defense pact in the way that is being reported and that secures for Israel its permanent nuclear superiority ignores every U.S. attempt to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and its insistence last year on indefinitely extending the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This almost makes a bitter mockery of former U.S. President George Bush's initiative. We believe his initiative still represents U.S. policy on nuclear nonproliferation in the Middle East, a policy that has the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in the region as its priority.

He added that this contradiction turns Israeli and U.S. participation on the committee for regional security and disarmament operating as part of the multilateral negotiations into a farce, because, instead of guaranteeing security for all the parties and disarming them, it pushes these parties toward armament and toward acquiring the most sophisticated weapons of destruction.

On the same topic, the peace process and the dangers threatening it, AL-AHRAM's editorial said that in light of the absence of coordination and comprehensive strategic views among the Arab countries, the peace process in the Middle East is stopped short, with no progress. Perhaps the crises it faces put it into reverse. Everyone knows that a basic element of negotiation is the negotiator's sense of power, that he holds many cards and numerous alternatives enabling him to manuever and realize the greatest number of legitimate rights. But the Arab reality has cost the Arab negotiator his ability to impose demands. The situation now is such that the mere start, continuation, or halt of the negotiations is a purely Israeli decision that is subjected to the special Israeli view.

The paper noted President Mubarak's statements in the joint news conference with the Syrian president in Damascus in this regard. The paper said President Mubarak touched the heart of the matter when he stressed the need for the Arabs to unite their words to avert danger.

It noted the need for everyone to realize that negotiations with Israel are characterized by great difficulties and that uniting ranks and agreeing over a single stance that secures the basic minimum Arab rights is the only guarantee for a sound Arab negotiating stance, which must be supported at this crucial stage of Arab history.

The paper also stressed the need for everyone to realize that any gains realized by moving away from coordination are very poor gains compared with Arab losses in the future of this nation.

AL-JUMHURIYAH chief editor Mahfuz al-Ansari, in his weekly column, dealt with developments in the peace issue in light of French President Jacques Chirac's visit to Cairo on Saturday [6 April]. He writes: This visit should not and ought not to be seen as one of those traditional official, working, and personal visits that leaders exchange. He said: Several important factors reflect the importance of this visit, primarily timing and the circumstances prompting the great French leader, Chirac, to visit Egypt twice in under a month. He responded to President Husni Mubarak's call to save the peace process and attended the summit in Sharm al-Shaykh on 13 March. Now he is coming to Cairo on 6 April to spend three days there and in Alexandria.

He added: The second factor is the Mediterranean Sea basin, particularly its eastern shore, where the peace process is suffering a "severe jolt" that is almost ruining what has been built and created during the past five years, that is, since Madrid in 1991, as manifested by events and incidents. He said that among these practices and events is the deteriorating situation in the West

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Bank and Gaza following violent acts, counterviolence, and the resulting repressive and punitive measures taken by Israel against the Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority. These measures include the suspension of negotiations and contacts, the closure of entry points, the refusal to withdraw from Hebron, collective punishment, and the demolition of houses.

Al-Ansari noted that these measures and practices also include the suspension of the Syrian-Israeli negotiations in Washington's suburbs and the launch of Israeli campaigns against Syria that could ultimately lead to the destruction of the bridges of confidence built recently, especially as these Israeli campaigns reflect inflexibility over the principles and fundamentals on which the negotiations are based and that are summed up in the principle of land in return for peace, or, more accurately, complete withdrawal from Syrian territories in return for full recognition of Israel.

He said: Another factor are the incidents in the east of the Mediterranean Sea, the real permanent war waged by Israel against Lebanon, a war that witnessed an unprecedented escalation in recent weeks and days, the air raids, concentrated artillery bombardments, raids and attacks on the villages of the south with tanks and special forces, and the kidnapping of people and demolition of houses.

The writer said he believes the third factor indicating the importance of the visit and showing its regional and international dimensions is the "hot" international situation in some parts, as is the case between China and the United States in east Asia, particularly in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Straits region, and the policy of containment. Another hot spot is the eastern Mediterranean Sea, as we noted earlier, the threat to peace throughout the region, the return to confrontation and conflict, and the arms race in the Middle East, which replaced hopes of cooperation and development under peace.

Al-Ansari added: In addition to the confrontations or political setbacks that could spell military danger worldwide, there is also the international economic crisis and the "stagnation" everywhere, which is accompanied by "competition" that carries the seeds of conflicts that could evolve negatively and thus affect the "relative detente" created by the sudden dramatic end of the "Cold War."

This is the fourth factor that makes Chirac's second visit to Cairo inside a month an extremely important and momentous one.

Under the headline "The Israeli Dimona Reactor — a Beast Sleeping on the Border," the opposition newspaper AL-WAFD wrote in a full-page investigation that a nuclear disaster will take place and is expected to threaten Egypt and the Arab countries because of Israel's belligerence and refusal to submit its nuclear activities to international inspection.

It pointed out that Israeli television started this dangerous discussion when an Israeli nuclear expert announced last week that Israel has buried tonnes of radioactive nuclear waste in the Negev desert near the Dimona reactor at a depth of only 1,000 meters.

The paper clarified that the source of danger here is the possibility of a strong earthquake hitting the area, which is considered an earthquake zone. Such an earthquake would push the highly dangerous waste to the Sinai aquifers. Such an earthquake could also destroy the reactor itself, which would threaten the whole region with nuclear disaster.

It also pointed out that the newspapers revealed in April 1993 a nuclear leak in the Israeli Dimona reactor, the reactor used by Israel to produce its nuclear bombs. At that time Israeli experts warned of the danger of continuing to use the reactor because of its age. They also demanded that most of the technological equipment and parts should be replaced for fear of an explosion, along the lines of Chernobyl.

The paper said that proceeding from this serious information, the Dimona reactor now threatens the whole Middle East region with an expected catastrophe.

The newspaper AL-AKHBAR dedicated its editorial to Security Council measures against Sudan and Egypt's stance on this. Under the headline "Zero Hour Approaches the al-Turabi Government," it said that zero hour is now close, since the Security Council has started its deliberations on measures expected to be passed against al-Turabi's government, and his follower 'Umar al-Bashir, if it continues to do what it pleases and not implement the Security Council resolution giving the ruling regime in Khartoum 90 days to hand over the three terrorists. The regime smuggled them in and sheltered them after they failed to implement the crime they organized in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa to attack Egyptian President Husni Mubarak. The Almighty's protection saved the president and thwarted the evil criminals.

The paper added that al-Turabi and his gang have spent the grace period given them by the Security Council and the OAU practicing their games and proposing ideas that stem from people who are mentally retarded.

AL-AKHBAR noted that the international community has ridiculed, even displayed anger, in confronting every naive attempt by al-Turabi and his mouthpieces to

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get away from the sanctions that are expected to be issued by the Security Council within days and with the end of the period granted to the Sudanese regime. All al-Turabi's attempts to dodge the strict resolutions the Security Council will issue on the specified date increased the Council members' determination to condemn the Sudanese Government for committing a crime that is so ugly it could only have been committed by organized criminal gangs.

AL-AKHBAR concluded its editorial saying: Those who believe the government and people of Egypt, who are linked by eternal relations and bonds, will be happy about any harsh sanctions issued by the Security Council against Sudan are wrong. The people of Sudan realize how much Egypt cares about the Sudanese brothers' prosperity. The brothers in Sudan will be the first victims of their rulers' stupidity. These rulers have been imposed on the people by the force of weapons. We hope the international community will find a way to direct the repercussions of the crimes their leaders commit away from the good Sudanese people. The Sudanese leaders are no less criminal than the war criminals the international community insists on trying for their base crimes.

Egypt: U.S. Backing Blamed for Israeli Actions

NC0304104596 Cairo AL-AKHBAR in Arabic 29 Mar 96 p 18

[From the "Arab Stories" column by Wajih Dhikri: "The Israeli Terrorism and U.S. Backing"]

[FBIS Translated Text] God's curse be on Saddam Husayn. He opened the Arab nation's windows and doors for the Americans to come and steal Arab money, oil, decisions, and security. God's curse be on him for, had it not been for him, there would not have been this blatant U.S. backing for the extremist Israeli thinking. Decisions are not Arab anymore, or even American, but Israeli ones with stupid backing by the U.S. Administration.

When Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] carried out three suicide attacks in Jerusalem, Ashqelon, and Tel Aviv, we denounced and condemned them and turned a blind eye to Israel's history of terrorism. It was the Israelis who planted the seeds of terrorism in the Middle East since 1939, and continue to do so to this day. We ignored the massacres perpetrated daily by Israel in south Lebanon, which it has completely destroyed, displacing its inhabitants and leaving them without succor or shelter.

We called the three suicide attacks by the Palestinians terrorism, even though they were retaliation against Israeli terrorist operations. And despite the fact that there is a thin line between terrorism and national struggle when there are occupying forces. The Arab world condemned the three operations.

An international summit for the peacemakers was immediately held in Sharm al-Shaykh. It was attended by world leaders who came to protect peace in the Middle East.

We thought Israel was reassured and that it will continue along the peace course — which is protected by the world — to the end.

U.S. President Bill Clinton travelled to Israel and donned a yarmulke. All that remained was for him to speak in Hebrew. We said that it was meant to increase Israel's confidence.

But what happened and what will happen are a stab for the Palestinians in particular and the Arab nation in general. Bill Clinton went from the peacemakers summit in Sharm al-Shaykh to Israel, not to back the peace process, but to back the process of Israeli terrorism against the Palestinians.

What happened following the visit by peacemaker Clinton? Israel blew up dozens of Palestinian houses in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel arrested thousands of Palestinians and threw them into Israeli jails. Israel staged intensive raids on south Lebanon. Israel is continuing its siege of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and its refusal to let Palestinians work inside Israel. Israel's media is continuing its campaign of hatred against the Palestinians, inciting Israelis to kill Palestinians. Tension between Israelis and Palestinians has increased. The Palestinians might explode under all this pressure. All this happened after Bill Clinton's visit to Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres is currently on a visit to Washington to sign the so-called strategic agreement between the United States and Israel. The signing will take place as part of President Clinton's election campaign. This agreement might close the door of hope before the peace march in the Middle East, block the Middle Eastern market, greatly harm U.S. interests in the Middle East in the long run, provide the justification the Arab countries opposed to the peace process want, and strengthen their excuses for objections.

The U.S.-Israeli strategic agreement means that:

— Israeli terrorism against the Palestinians and Arabs will be supported under the slogan of countering terrorism.

— Israel's position as a nuclear country in the Middle East, with a long arm reaching all Arab countries, will

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be entrenched. This could prompt a nuclear race in the Middle East region, led by Iran.

— The peace process on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks might be totally stopped .

— Tension inside the Palestinian territories will increase. This could push 'Arafat to reject the role Israel has assigned him, that of "protecting Israel's security" from Palestinian attacks. The Palestinian president might be turned into the victim of his own role.

Incidentally, 'Arafat has so far not received any support for the Palestinian Authority from the Sharm al-Shaykh summit leaders.

— The Arab countries will hesitate with regard to proceeding with the peace process.

Therefore, Washington is no longer a partner in the peace process? nor a peacemaker. It has now become a sponsor of Israeli terrorism against the Palestinians and Arabs.

Once again, damned be Saddam Husayn who opened the doors and windows of the Arab nation, allowing the stupid Yankees to enter all parts of the Arab nation. May peace rest in peace.

Egypt: MB Spokesman Views Arrest of Members

NC0304194796 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Arabic 1630 GMT 3 Apr 96

[Telephone interview with Ma'mun al-Hudaybi, official MB spokesman, in Cairo, by Jihad al-'Idan in Tehran; date not given; from the "News and Reports" program—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [al-'Idan] Ma'mun al-Hudaybi, a number of Muslim Brotherhood [MB] members have been arrested on the pretext of threatening security and stability. What do you have to say about this?

[Al-Hudaybi] This is an unjustified, illegitimate aggression. All those who were arrested are highly educated people with very good reputations and high ethics. They hold public posts and have a respectable social status. None of them was hiding, and none of them advocated anything against the shari'ah, the law, the Constitution, or ethics. They are known to the state and to the security authorities. None of them was engaged in any violations, violence, or calls for violence.

This is one of a series of acts of aggression against the Muslim Brothers by the Egyptian authorities. Last Thursday [28 March], Dr. 'Abd-al-Hamid al-Ghazali [one of the detainees] was elected overwhelmingly to the board of Cairo University's Teaching Staff Club. He is a renowned professor of economy and politics. The other detainees are university professors or members of university teaching staffs. Muhammad Mahdi 'Akif is a former undersecretary and a former People's Assembly member. All of them are known figures with social status. None of them ever did anything to disrupt security. This is part of a series of aggressions and government terrorism against us and the people in general.

[Al-'Idan] Some say the arrests were one of the fruits of the Sharm al-Shaykh summit and the subsequent conferences held to confront the Islamists. What do you think?

[Al-Hudaybi] This is part of a series of aggressions against us that started a long time ago, in January 1995, when Dr. 'Isam al-'Aryan, Dr. al-Jazzar, and others were arrested, tried by military courts, and prevented from running in the People's Assembly elections. After that, another group of MB members was arrested. So this is an ongoing thing, and we beseech God for help.

[Al-'Idan] How true are reports that there are splits within the MB group—the talk about the al-Wasat [Center] Party, and all these things that have accompanied the arrests?

[Al-Hudaybi] Had those reports had a shade of truth, the government would have been happy, and it would have encouraged the splits. But you find that one of the detainees is a representative of the founders of the al-Wasat Party; another one is Dr. 'Isam Shahin — that is, a number of the founders of the party were arrested and accused of being in agreement with the leadership of the MB. The government knows that there are no splits within the MB, God willing.

[Al-'Idan] How many people were arrested in this recent wave?

[Al-Hudaybi] Thirteen people were arrested in the last wave, yesterday and the day before.

[Al-'Idan] The Interior Ministry says that the police have monitored contacts between the MB and both the Islamic Group and the Jihad Organization in order to regain control over trade unions and mosques. How do you view these accusations?

[Al-Hudaybi] This is a clear manipulation of facts, a lie, and a slander. We have no links with the Islamic Group, the Jihad, or any other group calling for violence, or with any other organization at all, for that matter. The Muslim Brothers have their own independent entity; they have no links with anybody. As for control of unions and professional associations, as I told you, Dr. 'Abd-al-Hamid al-Ghazali, for example, was elected by his colleagues. He did not make it

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onto the board of the Teaching Staff Club by riding a tank, nor did he seize his membership by force. Those who lead the professional associations were elected by their colleagues. Every election is held under the supervision of a judicial authority. The story of seizing and infiltrating professional associations means that the government is bankrupt. If it enjoyed popular support, it would not have feared freedom and the holding of elections. It has obstructed the elections of the Engineers Syndicate for a year and a half or two. It has also been obstructing elections at the Cairo branch of the Bar Association. So if the government was really supported by the people, it would hold these elections. We do not force anyone to elect us; it is the people who elect us of their free will, but the government does not want the people to exercise their own free will or to sincerely express their opinions.

[Al-'Idan] What methods you will use to counter these arrests and obtain the release of the detainees?

[Al-Hudaybi] For us God suffices. He is the best disposer of affairs [Koranic verse]. We will resort to nothing but the good word: Invite all to the way of thy lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching [Koranic verse]. God willing, no one of us will be engaged in violence. This is a firm MB principle. We will fully adhere to it, God willing. Praise be to God, as the days pass all Muslim Brothers prove that they adhere to the principle of nonviolence and fully avoid any suspicious acts. We insist on preforming our message through wisdom and beautiful preaching. At some point in time, the Prophet Muhammad, may God's peace and prayers be upon him, said: O Al Yasir [family of early Muslims who were tortured by atheists], be patient, you have a rendezvous with paradise. He could not do anything more than that. We will be committed to good preaching, good action, and noble ethics.

[Al-'Idan] Tehran Radio's "News and Reports" program thanks Ma'mun al-Hudaybi, official spokesman of the MB in Egypt, for this statement. Thank you Mr. al-Hudaybi.

[Al-Hudaybi] You are welcome. Thank you.

Sudan

Sudan: Khartoum University Students Continue Demonstrations

NC0304163596 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1338 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Khartoum, 3 Apr (MENA)—Khartoum University students continued their demonstrations today for the second day in a row. Approximately 5,000 students participated in the demonstrations and shouted slogans hostile to the government and the National Islamic Front, such as "the people of April are in the battlefield." The demonstrations blocked University Street and al-Jumhuriyah Street, the two largest streets in Khartoum. Security and police forces fired tear gas, injuring two students who were taken to the hospital. However, their injuries are not serious. Three female students fainted and were taken to the hospital as a result of tear gas fired inside a ward in the Bahr al-Ghazal Boarding School.

The demonstrators smashed the vehicle of Dr. Zakiyah 'Awad Sati, dean of the arts college in Khartoum University. She is an Islamist and was a member of the former national transitional council, "the appointed parliament." Over 3,000 security and police forces wielding arms and batons deployed in all streets of Khartoum.

The Sudan University students released a statement expressing solidarity with the Khartoum University students. The Islamic Trend in Khartoum University released a statement accusing the National Grouping, which includes the Ummah Party, the Democratic Unionist Party, and the Communist Party, of obstructing the elections. The National Grouping also issued a statement saying that the Islamic Trend wants to rig the elections, tear up the election cards, and move the polling boxes from the tallying center in the college to the students federation center. A decision was made by the election committee inside Khartoum University, canceling the elections that were held the day before yesterday. Khartoum University President Dr. Hashim Ahmad al-Hadi requested the students be quiet.

Later, the students of Cairo University, Khartoum Branch, now known as the Two Nile University, staged a demonstration inside the campus and in nearby areas and shouted slogans against the authorities.

Merchants and businessmen closed their shops and offices on al-Jumhuriyah and al-Qasr streets for fear of riots and demonstrations similar to the September events.

The demonstrations began at Khartoum University yesterday when the Islamist students, supporting the government, and the National Grouping students began pelting each other with stones because the Islamist students tried to move the polling boxes to the student federation headquarters, in violation of the rules. The demonstrations increased yesterday afternoon when the Islamist students again tried to move the polling boxes by force and the National Grouping students confronted them and set out for huge demonstrations on University Street and al-Baladiyah Street. Security forces succeeded in controlling the demonstrations after blocking both streets. There were no casualties.

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Sudan: Student Demonstrations Abate; Union Activities Frozen

NC0304163496 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1522 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Khartoum, 3 Apr (MENA)—The situation at Khartoum University and Cairo University, Khartoum branch, known now as "the Two Nile University," has settled down after yesterday's and today's demonstrations by approximately 5,000 students, and following the deployment of additional security forces in these areas. So far, 11 students have been arrested, including three female students. Three students were seriously wounded and three female students fainted earlier today.

Khartoum University President Dr. Hashim 'Abd-al-Hadi made a decision freezing the activities of the university's student union. A number of student union members said that the decision to cancel the elections was made by the university president earlier today, because only 48 percent of the 16,000 eligible students voted.

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Bahrain

Bahrain: Security Source Announces Arrest of 2 'Saboteurs'

JN0304134696 Manama WAKH in Arabic 1030 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Manama, 3 Apr (WAKH) — A responsible Bahraini security source said that the Public Security agencies arrested, following extensive investigations and efforts, two saboteurs who deliberately set fire to the new cars warehouse at al-Zayyani Garage in al-Zinj area on 12 March 1996. The two saboteurs were identified as Sadiq 'Ali Hasan, 19, a garage worker who lives in al-Zinj area, and Zuhayr Hasan Ibrahim, 25, a salesman who also lives in al-Zinj.

In a statement to the GULF NEWS AGENCY, the responsible source added: In their confessions that were made and recorded before the investigating judge, the two defendants said they prepared for a number of sabotage and arson crimes in some areas with the aim of disrupting security and order. To this end, they agreed to burn the new cars warehouse at al-Zayyani Garage in al-Zinj area. The two defendants admitted that on the specified day, they went to the warehouse, poured flammable material on the garage floor and on the cars inside the garage, set fire to the place, and escaped. A number of cars in the warehouse were burned.

The source added: The defendants also admitted before the investigating judge that in cooperation with other saboteurs, they committed a number of arson and sabotage crimes against power generators and cars in various areas.

The responsible source concluded his statement by saying: The security agencies will continue to implement preventive security measures to prevent sabotage crimes. In cooperation with citizens and residents, they will also keep chasing and arresting perpetrators of sabotage incidents, who seek to undermine the country's security. The source emphasized: Anybody who is tempted to tamper with security and stability or harm the safety and property of secure people will not escape just punishment.

Kuwait

Kuwait: UN Security Council Announces Extension of UNIKOM

LD0304220796 Kuwait Radio Kuwait in Arabic 2100 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The UN Security Council has decided tonight to extend the mission of the international peace-keeping force on the Kuwait-Iraq border.

The Security Council agreed during the meeting it held once every six months on the extension of the mission of the peacekeeping force, UNIKOM [UN Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission], following a proposal by UN Secretary General Dr. Butrus Butrus-Ghali. [passage omitted]

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia: Visiting French Defense Minister Holds News Conference

LD0304182996 Riyadh SPA in Arabic 1558 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Riyadh, 3 Apr — His Excellency French Defense Minister Charles Millon has explained that his current visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia falls within the framework of political and defense relations between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the French Republic and within the preparations for the upcoming visit of French President Jacques Chirac to the Kingdom in the near future, God willing.

He also said that this visit also comes as a logical result to the visit that "I made few months ago to Saudi Arabia where I met the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz and HRH Prince Sultan Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, the second deputy prime minister, defense and aviation minister, and inspector general."

At a news conference held this morning the French defense minister stated that he had lengthy talks with Prince Sultan about questions of mutual interest to the two countries.

The French minister said he had conveyed to the prince President Jacques Chirac's desire to reaffirm the traditional friendship linking the governments and peoples of the two countries.

He added: "France has expressed, during the talks, its belief that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is playing the role of a balancing force maintaining the security in the region. We have also expressed our happiness at the achievements of the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] and the role it is playing in maintaining balance and security in the region."

He explained that Prince Sultan had reviewed the Kingdom's views and analyses concerning the situation in the region.

The French minister alluded to the defense agreements between his country and the Kingdom and said: "Those agreements, which were concluded last year, are being implemented now and there is a higher military committee to coordinate between the two countries which will soon meet in Paris."

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Millon stressed that his country will always honor its pledges and commitments towards its friends and respect its undertakings which it had signed. He added that the talks also dealt with combatting terrorism and noted the identical views of France and the Kingdom during the Sharm al-Shaykh summit. It also included issues relating to the situation in Iraq and Iran. Millon stressed the identical views of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and his country towards the various issues discussed.

He expressed his hope that Iraq would implement the Security Council's resolutions to alleviate the sufferings experienced by the Iraqi people.

Replying to a question on the European moves to push the peace process in the Middle East he said: "President Chirac had expressed France's position very clearly concerning the closure of the Palestinian territories, stressing the necessity for the peace process to continue through negotiations." He added that his country will do its utmost to enable those negotiations to be held in the best possible circumstances, expressing his confidence that it is in the interest of both sides — the Palestinian and the Israeli — that a stable peace agreement to be agreed upon and signed.

Replying to a question on France's position vis-a-vis the United Arab Emirates' islands occupied by Iran, he said: "France calls for the total maintenance of territorial integrity in the area and for respecting their sovereignty"

Millon expressed his support to the general and comprehensive implementation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty [NPT], the banning of nuclear tests, and the banning the proliferation of these weapons.

About his country's nuclear tests, the minister said that obviously France is among the supporters of signing the NPT, and that it will not carry any tests in the future.

Saudi Arabia: Further Peres Trips Said Ruled Out; Sanaa Denies Contacts

MM0404131096 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 4 Apr 96 pp 1,4

[Report by Hasin al-Bunyan in Riyadh: "Invitation to Peres for Other Gulf Visits Ruled Out"]

[FBIS Translated Text] A Saudi source has ruled out the possibility of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia emulating the Sultanate of Oman and Qatar in welcoming any Israeli official in the foreseeable future, if the Jerusalem issue is not settled and Israel does not make a commitment not to alter the holy city's demographic and geographic nature or undermine the situation in place since 1967.

Other Saudi and Gulf sources in Riyadh have stressed to AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT that the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] states were informed of Muscat and Doha's decision to invite Peres to visit the two GCC member states. The sources said that the Qataris and Omanis stressed to Peres the need to make progress in the peace negotiations on both the Syrian-Israeli and the Lebanese-Israeli tracks and achieve a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy.

The sources said that the GCC states are convinced that Muscat's and Doha's welcome to the Israeli prime minister is in itself intended to reinforce the standing of the peace process, based on the GCC states' positive views supporting the process, and to reaffirm the need for the peace to be a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace as a basis for security and stability in the region, for the interchange of interests between its states, and for reaffirming tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and cultural cooperation between its peoples.

The sources said that the GCC states believe that Peres' visits to the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Qatar come within the [principle of] sovereign, free decision, whereby any member state can make a sovereign decision with regard to its relations and has the right to keep its motives private and unpublicized in any issue relating to sovereignty on its territory, a matter for which there is no clear text in the regulations of the GCC's Higher Council which would prohibit taking such a measure.

Meanwhile, Sanaa categorically denied yesterday that there have been any contacts with Israel with a view to establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries.

An authoritative source in the Yemeni Foreign Ministry in Sanaa said that news agencies' reports citing Israel radio on secret contacts to establish diplomatic relations between them are unfounded.

Israel radio said yesterday that Israel is holding secret contacts with Yemen and Bahrain with a view to establishing diplomatic relations between them.

Saudi Arabia: Interior Ministry Denies Hijackers Boarded Plane in Jeddah

LD0304132096 Riyadh SPA in English 1234 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Riyadh, April 3, SPA — An official source at the Ministry of Interior has categorically denied the report which said that the

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hijackers of the Egyptian plane last week had started their journey from Jeddah.

What was said in this regard was untrue, said the official source in a statement to SPA and added 'it was never proved that the hijackers had boarded the plane from King 'Abd-al-'Aziz international airport of Jeddah'.

'What was published by the information media on the outcome of the investigations conducted by the Egyptian security authorities as well as the confessions of the hijackers that they had embarked the plane from Luxor in Egypt, would make it clear that the hijackers, who are of Egyptian nationality, had never travelled from Jeddah', the source elaborated.

The official source was responding to the report carried by REUTERS and the Middle East News Agency, while quoting Major General Farouq Tajuddin, the director of Luxor Airport, that the hijacked plane was carrying three Saudis who were likely to be behind the hijacking incident.

On the other hand an official source at Cairo airport said the hijackers: Mohammed Mahmoud, Ali Mohammed and Khalid Mohammed, had boarded the plane from Jeddah airport.

The official source at the Ministry of Interior also refuted the report published by the Egyptian newspaper of 'AL-SIYASI' while quoting Major General Sami Abdel-Jawad, the director of Security Administration at the Egyptian province of Al-Me A, which said 'the hijackers, due to negligence at Jeddah airport, were able to embark the plane from Jeddah airport carrying their weapons'.

United Arab Emirates

United Arab Emirates: Diplomatic Relations Established With Mozambique

JN0304143696 Manama WAKH in Arabic 1140 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Abu Dhabi, 3 Apr (WAKH) — The United Arab Emirates [UAE] and the Republic of Mozambique agreed to establish diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level as of 3 April 1996. A joint statement issued here today said that the decision to establish relations stemmed from a joint desire to increase ties and improve bilateral cooperation. The EMIRATES NEWS AGENCY said that the establishment of relations with Mozambique raised the number of countries with which the UAE has diplomatic relations to 136.

Yemen

Yemen: Cabinet Denounces Israeli Acts, Affirms Position on Peace

JN0404114196 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Television Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 3 Apr 96

[Announcer-read report over video]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The cabinet met in an ordinary session today under Prime Minister 'Abd-al-'Aziz 'Abd-al-Ghani. [passage omitted]

The cabinet discussed developments in the occupied Arab territory and the Israeli siege and repressive measures against the Palestinian people. The cabinet strongly denounced these acts which obstruct the peace process, considering them new evidence of the lack of sincere Israeli intentions toward the peace process. The cabinet affirmed our country's principled position, which supports the just and comprehensive peace that is based on Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories in Palestine, southern Lebanon, and the Golan Heights, and on ending the terrorism and violence that are directed against the Palestinian people.

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Iraq: Intelligence Officers Reportedly Recalled From Amman

JN0304170696 (Clandestine) Voice of Rebellious Iraq in Arabic 1215 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman — Diplomatic sources in Amman said that the defeated Baghdad regime authorities recalled two intelligence officers who worked at the tyrant's embassy in Jordan. Diplomatic relations between the regime and the Jordanian Government had become tense. It was proved to the Jordanian Government that the two officers were implementing the regime's intelligence plans under diplomatic cover.

The sources recently told the Kuwaiti newspaper AL-QABAS that the two Saddamist officers, Salim 'Abd-al-Husayn Salim al-Rubay'i, who was the embassy consul, and Hamid Rashid, an embassy employee, left Amman last week in a step by the tyrant's government to avoid their being expelled by the Jordanian authorities after they discovered the two had been carrying out acts that threaten Jordanian security.

The same sources said that Muhammad al-Fahham, assistant to the Saddamist cultural attache, also left Amman for the same reasons.

Earlier last month, the Jordanian Government decided to expel Husayn Faraj Khalaf from the tyrant's embassy in Amman. Khalaf was carrying out acts incompatible with his diplomatic duties in Amman.

Iraq: Al-Khazraji Joins 'Accord'; 'Vast Forces' Reportedly Mass in South

MM0404111496 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 4 Apr 96 pp 1,6

[Report by Salamah Ni'mat in Amman and AL-HAYAH in London: "Al-Khazraji Stresses Army Role in Iraq's 'Salvation'"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Staff General Nizar al-Khazraji, the former Iraqi chief of staff who defected to Jordan last month, has urged the various Iraqi opposition factions in Iraq and abroad to "embark on the final and decisive phases" in rescuing Iraq from "the major tragedy caused by Saddam Husayn and a handful of his henchmen."

In his first statement since defecting to Jordan, al-Khazraji said that he has decided to join the Amman-based Iraqi National Accord Movement led by Iyyad 'Alawi.

He added that he will work with the movement and with "the devoted brothers in the military in Iraq and abroad, to move on to the final phases in the liberation of our homeland, our people, and its armed forces and save them from the catastrophe that has befallen Iraq for many long years...in order to build the Iraq of the future where stability, security, democracy, equality, and justice for all will prevail without racial, sectarian, or religious discrimination."

He said that he will work with the opposition for "an Iraq with complete sovereignty over its territory which enjoys brotherhood and a firmly established national unity...an Iraq which rejects hatred and aggression...an Iraq with fraternal and even-handed relations with everyone...an Iraq working with all states with an open heart and mind...which would be useful and would also benefit...which would love and not hate...which would be peaceful and not hostile...in order to ensure progress, culture, and prosperity for our people."

He said that "Saddam's policies have led to the fragmentation and breakdown of the unity of our land, our people, and our army, the loss of its morale, and the sullying of its reputation and dignity."

It should be mentioned that the Jordanian authorities have deliberately not accorded much importance to al-Khazraji's defection to Jordan, while waiting to ascertain his views and political plan.

Political sources have said that al-Khazraji's joining the Iraqi National Accord Movement is a major boost to the movement which has wide-ranging regional and international contacts.

In London, the Supreme Assembly for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq [SAIRI] said that Baghdad has assembled vast forces in southern Iraq and that "it expects this to be in preparation" for launching an attack on the marshes region. Hamad al-Juburi, the SAIRI spokesman in London, told AL-HAYAH that the mobilization of forces was carried out in the 4th Army's territory. [passage omitted]

Iraq: SAIRI Leader Cited on Damascus Opposition Conference Topics

JN0304162996 (Clandestine) Voice of Rebellious Iraq in Arabic 1215 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] His Eminence Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Haqim, chairman of the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq [SAIRI], who is visiting Damascus to attend the Iraqi opposition meetings there, said the visit is within the framework of Syria's invitation to the Iraqi Opposition. In a statement to the ASSOCIATED PRESS correspondent, his eminence said that the invitation comes at a time when Iraq's domestic conditions are in a state of collapse, given that the tyrant's regime is breathing its last. We

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have more in the following report by our correspondent Huda Haydar in Damascus:

[Begin Haydar recording] The ASSOCIATED PRESS correspondent interviewed His Eminence Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Haqim on the nature of his visit to the Syrian Arab Republic and the aims of the consultative meeting that is scheduled to be held in Damascus this week.

In the interview, his eminence said that the visit is within the framework of Syria's invitation to the Iraqi Opposition for a consultative meeting to discuss the political circumstances [words indistinct] and seek ways to deliver the Iraqi people from oppression and mitigate their miserable conditions. In addition to the consultative meeting, there will be meetings with Syrian officials and discussions with other Iraqi brothers from other forces and from the Iraqi people who live in this generous country.

His eminence said: I believe that the meeting will be a preliminary one to prepare for an expanded meeting. A program of action will be presented at the meeting. It is based on two main issues: the expanded meeting of the Iraqi opposition and the practical measures to deal with the miserable conditions of the Iraqi people and save them from the oppression to which Iraq is now exposed. [end recording]

Iraq: Saddam Orders Completion of al-Najaf-al-Kufah Water Project

JN0304170296 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1225 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Al-Najaf, 3 Apr (INA)—His Excellency President Saddam Husayn has ordered the allocation of 150 million dinars to complete the consolidated al-Najaf-al-Kufah water project, 120 km south of Baghdad, which will have a daily capacity of 40 million gallons per day. Work on this project was halted due to the unfair embargo imposed on Iraq.

Interior Minister Muhammad Zimam 'Abd-al-Razzaq told the IRAQI NEWS AGENCY about the allocation. The minister added that this move reflects President Saddam Husayn's care for and concern about this holy city. The move was also prompted by a desire to provide potable water to the residents of the city, given its religious and historical status. The minister added that the ministry's technical offices will complete this project in record time to end the water shortage experienced by new neighborhoods in the governorate.

Iraq: Daily Says U.S. 'Choosy' in War Against Terrorism

JN0304143896 Baghdad INA in English 1200 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Baghdad, April 3, INA—An Iraqi daily has stressed that despite the passage of five years since the U.S.-led aggression, Iraq is still strong and enters a new phase of history.

THE BAGHDAD OBSERVER said in its editorial today that the Iraqis have reconstructed all that has been destroyed by the allies' bombs and missiles.

The paper described the recent revelation of the CIA's involvement in acts of terrorism inside Iraq as a clear-cut evidence that the U.S. Administration is still attempting intentionally to destabilize Iraq's security and interfere in its internal affairs.

With these acts, the U.S. Administration contradicts itself for it has always claimed that it is determined to fight and end terrorism all around the world, the paper said. However little has been done to fight terrorism or perhaps it is better to say that the U.S. has been choosy in its anti-terrorism war.

It said in January 1991, the U.S. brought its allies to carry out atrocious acts of terrorism against all of the Iraqis who under the leadership of President Saddam Husayn were brave enough to stand to the aggression and the unjust embargo which has taken a heavy toll of the nation's children, the sick and the elderly.

Many other countries including Libya, Cuba, Vietnam, Somalia and Sudan have also been the target of the so-called U.S. anti-terrorist war, in addition to provocative statements released by the American Administration against China and Japan to impose its hegemony on every region of the world under the infamous new world order, BAGHDAD OBSERVER added.

Only Israel, it went on to say, has been the spoiled child of successive U.S. administrations which allow Israel to carry out all types of terrorism against the Palestinians.

The paper said that since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. has been acting as the new leader of the world to impose its hegemony even on the UN and the Security Council. Many UN resolutions were orchestrated by the U.S. policy makers.

The paper said that the U.S. will reap nothing but failure and disgrace of its policy of suppression over certain countries around the world because people who have undergone U.S. injustice are today fully aware that U.S. cares for nothing but its interests. So any country which

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stands in the way of the U.S. interests is prone to U.S. anger, atrocity and terrorism.

Many years ago, the U.S. planted Israel in the heart of the Arab nation to plunder its wealth and control oil fields. This false alien, Israel, has been the bridge the U.S. has been using to pass its anti-Arab and particularly anti-Iraq conspiracies.

When Iraq emerged as a major power in the region in the 80's, the U.S. triggered off the Iranian aggression against Iraq and the war went on for eight years. The aim was to destroy Iraq's military and economic potential but the enemies were out in their calculations since Iraq emerged victorious and was able to stand on its feet after the long years of war, the paper said.

However, the U.S. continued plotting against Iraq. Umm al-Ma'arik [Mother of Battles] battle was the result of the enemies venom when the U.S. and its allies used all their military technology to bring Iraq back to the dark ages.

Today Iraq enters into a new phase of history. The Iraqis have witnessed the experience of democracy which has been yet another blow in the face of the enemy. The public referendum on the nomination of President Saddam Husayn for presidency last October, the National Assembly elections on March and the Local People's Councils elections to be held next May are just a thorn in the side of Iraq's enemies and a disappointment for the U.S. Administration, THE BAGHDAD OBSERVER concluded.

Iraq: U.S. 'Blackmail' Said Targeted at Iraqi People

MM0304160596 London AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI in Arabic 3 Apr 96 p 15

[Article by Walid Rabah: "U.S. Blackmail and Iraqi Military Capabilities"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Every now and again, the United States announces through one of its military people or politicians that it is certain that Iraq has regained its military capabilities and that it poses a renewed threat to the oil-producing region in the Arab Gulf. The military person or the politician will then stroke his beard and pause before confirming the news, and then weep over and bemoan the future of the region, and especially Saudi Arabia. He will then announce the movement of some U.S. 6th Fleet units or Marines to some Gulf states such as Bahrain or others, in preparation for a confrontation with the imminent Iraqi threat.

These reports have become well known in U.S. and Arab circles, and mean "you must pay if you want us to defend you." However, to the Arab and foreign press they mean that the U.S. treasury faces considerable financial problems, and has no other way of offsetting the deficit except by blackmailing Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf in order to regain its prosperity.

What is truly regrettable however, is that Saudi Arabia is aware of this, and knows full well that, due to U.S. blackmail, its debts are in a pitiful state, and that it can no longer repay its mounting debts of over $150 billion, mostly in the form of loans from the World Bank and some states in the U.S. orbit. This means that the United States gets payment from Saudi Arabia and deposits the money in its banks or those controlled by its agents. Saudi Arabia then borrows its money again from the United States, but at a high interest rate, and after long delays for the purpose of offsetting the deficit in its services and annual budget.

Whether the U.S. Administration is Democrat or Republican, its predominant characteristic is the blackmail that normally finances the two parties' election campaigns and bolsters the treasury with a surplus of Gulf funds to offset the U.S. balance of payments and resolve U.S. crises through the hands of the Gulf rulers who misuse the people's oil, power, and bread.

If the United States and the states in its orbit confirm this fact each time, the other objective of the blackmail and the political statements about Iraq's military power is to maintain the economic sanctions on Iraq and to keep the Iraqi people perpetually panting in search for bread and for solutions to their economic problems. The fear that the Iraqi person may regain his economic well-being is what pushes the United States to keep the Iraqi threat present in the minds.

The target is the Iraqi person. It is neither Saddam Husayn, nor the Iraqi Government, nor any other Iraqi regime. The objective is to make the person pant in search of bread, so that he does not recover his breath and stand in the way of the conspiracies aimed at his existence, especially since the Iraqi is an educated and sensible person with a clear brain, capable of being creative when given the chance.

If we go back in time, we would find that the Iraqi person's brain has invented many essential items which could have transformed Iraq into a paradise without relying on Western or Eastern technologies. This citizen was able to assimilate all the facts of the modern age and create an autonomous environment which could have allowed Iraq to dispense with begging, live without the West, and not follow the West's desires in matters concerning its life. Hence, the perpetual fear that this person would regain his well-being has made it a main priority for the U.S. and the states in its orbit to retain control of Arab economic affairs, and particularly the

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oil, and to continue to draw the U.S. citizen's livelihood from the Arab masses' blood despite the results that cause considerable harm to the life of the industrious Arab person who usually applauds his kings and rulers without knowing the truth.

The U.S. blackmail which usually emerges once every few months is there for all to see. It is also visible to the thieving Arab rulers who make a mountain out of a molehill and magnify the issues according to U.S. wishes. If they tell them that Saddam Husayn is planning to invade Kuwait again, they will believe it or pretend to believe it, so that the Arab region remains under Western guardianship in all its forms, and particularly in the economic field. Its is obvious that the states that now bemoan Iraq's fate are the same ones that slit its throat from ear to ear. When these states realize the game of the U.S. economy, they should at least show some humility, tell the truth, and stand in the way of U.S. greed, which knows no bounds, in order to preserve their wealth for their sons. Otherwise this comedy will continue for a very long time, with the Arab person melting in the U.S. acid swamp which melts everything.

Iraq: Daily Calls U.S. Sanctions Against Sudan 'Act of Terrorism'

JN0304144296 Baghdad INA in English 1030 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Baghdad, April 3, INA — An Iraqi paper ran today Wednesday [3 April] an article describing the new American maneuvers of imposing economic sanctions against Sudan as an act of terrorism aiming at submitting this Arab country's will to the foreign force domination.

AL-THAWRAH daily confirmed that the United States of America is maneuvering and pushing hard to direct the U.N. Security Council towards taking such resolution, i.e., imposing economic sanctions on the Sudan to become the third Arab country after Iraq and Libya. And once this is achieved, it added, America would prove success for using one same weapon against three Arab countries.

The paper stressed that the present American maneuvers reveal the racialist attitude of the American policy inside the Security Council adding that Washington tends to relate any matter against any Arab country to different pretexts and with such enthusiasm that would not be paid for a matter concerning a foreign state.

It explained that such behavior does not reflect the American concern over their interests, for the Arabs never caused any harm to these alleged interests but rather were the good keepers and guardians of them.

The daily confirmed that using this weapon of imposing sanctions and starving peoples subjectively touches other peoples including those of the state government of which adopts the policy of sanctions imposition. [sentence as received]

This fact, the paper added, can be proved by the demands many American companies lately presented to their government asking for not imposing any sanctions for any political or human rights reasons just for the harm such policy is inflecting on the American economy itself.

The daily inquired about the beneficiary that stood behind the American maneuvers and pressure for directing another blow to the Arab nation.

The precise answer, the paper concluded, is the Zionist expansion plan. This can be confirmed by the statement of one of the Republican candidates who said that the Zionists occupy the Congress just like their occupation of the West Bank.

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Israel: Peres Explains 'New Middle East' Vision

TA0304175396 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 3 Apr 96 p B2

[Article by Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres: "Even if There Are No Shortcuts, We Are Content"]

[FBIS Translated Text] A statesman is occasionally called upon to ponder the correlation between vision and realpolitik. The question came up within the context of the notion of "a new Middle East" whose formulation is attributed to me. Where vision is concerned I plead guilty; I have always believed that without vision the country will disintegrate. The entire Zionist saga is a story of vision and belief in the ability to fulfill it.

My new Middle East is no different from what my teachers and mentors Berl Katznelson and David Ben-Gurion envisioned after the end of hostilities between Jews and Arabs. However, this was a remote dream in their time, whereas today it is an issue on the agenda.

My vision of the Middle East is neither simplistic nor one-dimensional, as if the region could historically be divided between a new and an old Middle East. For the sake of political action I distinguish among three historical periods in the Middle East:

The old Middle East: the Middle East of the big wars, awful bloodshed, the nonrecognition of Israel and the wish to annihilate it, the Arab boycott, and the acute East-West strife.

The Middle East in transition to peace: the period we are living in now. The Middle East after the collapse of the Soviet Union and after the Gulf war, which is characterized by predominant U.S. influence, gradual acceptance of the peace process, and significant modernization processes. On the other hand, this is still a Middle East that includes Iraq, Iran, and radical Islamic fundamentalism.

The new Middle East: A Middle East which will be established if the peace processes are completed and the fundamentalist factor is neutralized. This is a Middle East which, under the leadership of countries such as Egypt, Jordan, and a rehabilitated Lebanon, will move toward economic and social modernization and the joint exploitation of natural resources, as happened in the Far East.

However, these distinctions are neither categorical nor irreversible. It is clear to me that a real new Middle East will not come into being if the countries in the region do not embrace a democratic regime and culture. The argument I have with my ideological rivals is over the fact that I believe that a different Middle East, one that deeply aspires to peace and economic cooperation, can come into being even before all its countries become democratic.

The Middle East in Transition to Peace

In the huge mosaic of countries, regimes, and problems that is the Middle East, considerable tension can be discerned among three central trends: a trend of peace, development, and modernization; a deeply rooted reality of intellectual conservatism, economic and social freeze, and suspicion of the West; and a fundamentalist onslaught.

Anybody thoroughly analyzing the regimes and societies in the Gulf countries, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Morocco may identify significant manifestations of modernization and the development of what political scientists term "a civil society." These include Western influence and the growing involvement of Western companies in commerce, the media, and telecommunications, as well as the slow rise of a middle class and of professionals who influence society and the economy. Although many of them are still suspicious of Israel, the success of the peace process matters to them.

However, despite the promising evolution toward modernization and economic and social development, conservatism, traditionalism, and religious, social, and economic freeze are still strong in the region. The change in existing regimes and the socioeconomic structures on which they are based has been a very slow process.

These are for the most part traditional societies that have not undergone any real industrialization and have not yet managed to significantly raise their living and education standards. Islam, as an ancient culture and a conservative way of life, has a vast influence on the self-pride of societies in our region and their rejection of what they view as the corruptive elements of Western culture. All these perpetuate a deep frustration, and are the reason for the slow cultural assimilation of the peace process.

The third trend affecting our region is the Islamic onslaught. When assessing Islamic fundamentalism one should beware of simplistic generalizations and exaggerations. Identifying all of Islam with fundamentalism is wrong and unjust. Nor is it justified to argue that economic and social crises always engender radical fundamentalism, and that improving the economy will irrevocably lead to its collapse. History is full of violent Islamic movements throughout the Middle East and North Africa. And, although Islamic fundamentalism cannot be explained away only in economic terms, it is obvious that economic backwardness, unemployment, lack of jobs, and despair of the possibility of improving one's lot in life drive people to seek solace in clerics.

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Viewing the conservative reality of the Middle East as the most determining factor in our region leads to an understanding of the major struggle in our region, a struggle in which two new forces, modernization and peace on the one hand and radical fundamentalism on the other, each pull in different directions. The State of Israel cannot remain neutral in the face of this struggle, which is chiefly waged by Muslims. However, the peace process is not only our interest, but also the vital interest of all stable and developing regimes.

Most experts I know believe today that the current wave of fundamentalism is already past its peak and may even be waning. The problem is that even while on the wane, or perhaps because of it, it can cause significant instability through the use of terror.

The Balance of Achievements of the Oslo Agreements

The Middle East in which we have to live during this transition period is indeed fraught with dangers, and we have not yet found peace and quiet. However, the Oslo agreement and the implementation of the autonomy plan led to a revolutionary change in the status of the State of Israel in the past two and a half years. At home, we ceased ruling over another people, and we got out of the violent casbahs in Gaza and Nabulus. We enabled the PLO, the largest Palestinian organization, to leave the circle of war and terror. We have obtained impressive data, including data provided by reliable Palestinian sources, whereby a vast majority of the Palestinian population opposes terror and supports the continuation of the political process. In the wake of the recent terror attacks public support is emerging for Palestinian Authority officials to go into the mosques, prevent incitement, and enforce the law. Unlike the past, they are even arresting many terrorists and have begun destroying the terror infrastructure.

The Oslo agreements also led to the major achievement of peace with Jordan. For many years we had been aware of a deep affinity of interest between us and the Hashemite kingdom, but only the legitimacy accorded by the Oslo accords enabled its fulfillment and the attainment of a full and warm contractual peace.

It is hard to exaggerate the political and economic significance of the agreement with the PLO. The Oslo accords razed the walls of enmity and political alienation felt toward Israel by various Arab and Muslim countries in the second and third circle of the conflict, thus "legitimizing" Israel in the Third World. Belief in the possibility of achieving peace in our region and the chance of doing big business have brought new faces here in the past two years: representatives of large commercial banks in the United States and Europe, and many executives of leading multinational corporations from all over the world. Representatives of rich conglomerates from Germany, France, Japan, and Korea who in the past did not dare come near us for fear of the Arab boycott and the dangers of war are today roaming the corridors of our economic ministries. Many have opened interest offices in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Tourism, which I do not hesitate to dub Oslo tourism, has doubled in these years.

All these achievements are not just theoretical accolades of the Oslo process. There is hardly any Israeli citizen who has not benefited from them. Per capita income has risen in the past four years from $11,000 to $16,000. During the same period unemployment dropped from 11.5 to 5.8 percent. Living standards and private consumption surged considerably.

Having said that, I do not propose to negate the difficulties of the times in which we are living. The Middle East in transition is not yet democratic or free of hatred and violence. There are still in our region a small number of dictatorial and fanatical regimes which deprive their citizens of the right to participate in this growing consensus. In the peace-seeking societies, too, there are still small extremist groups sowing terror and fear. However, even in such painful times there is no denying the advantages that the peace process has already brought about.

Whoever calls today for stopping or slowing down the peace process is not only caving in to terror and to the minority in the Middle East advocating it, but also harming the personal welfare of every Israeli citizen and the big chances for the future. It is totally impossible to attain a new Middle East through a shortcut and without a transition period, however problematic this may be.

The Argument With the Right

My argument with the Israeli right is not about patriotism or fealty to Eretz Yisra'el. What has always distinguished us from the revisionist right and the radical left has been our refusal to believe in a binational solution on the one hand, and our aversion to a transfer of Arabs on the other. We are attached to this country with every fiber of our soul, but we cannot agree to sacrifice the people on its altar. A binational state is a foolproof recipe for disaster. Apartheid under the banner "autonomy for the people" or a forced deportation are solutions that are incompatible with the values of the 21st century, even if one ignores Jewish ethics which categorically reject such a move.

When I listen to what the Likud is really saying today I hear the voices of uncompromising fealty to Eretz Yisra'el. They really want to settle on every inch of land

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in Judaea and Samaria. They want to be there, because "Gaza is ours and, of course, so is Nabulus." The tragic demographic embrace that will be created between the two peoples does not bother them.

This is not a theoretical argument. If the advocates of a Greater Israel return to power, what they would offer the Israeli people would not be Oslo-plus-a-little-more-security, as a few right-wing leaders have been trying to tell the public. After all, they are committed to immediately resuming the settlement drive, and this step alone would dissolve the fragile Oslo formula. Within a short period of time the right-wing government would have to return the army to Nabulus, Gaza, and the refugee camps to make way for the new settlements and "to curb" terror. From there to a rekindling of the intifadah and the PLO's return to terror would only be a small step. All the political achievements of the Oslo process would go down the drain, including the international legitimization we attained in recent years and the special relationship with the United States, which emerged from the deep low of four years ago to a peak we had never known before.

The right's return to power would have very painful economic repercussions. The renewed Palestinian intifadah and the crackdown on terror by the right-wing government would bring back the horrible images to television screens all over the world. All at once tourism would be devastated and the international investments that came here in the past two years would quickly leave Israel as if their tails were on fire.

More than ever before the right camp is in a serious predicament. Not demagoguery but the solid facts of the past four years have made their political program irrelevant. The last resort of the right-wing camp's propaganda today is terror and the jingoistic platitude "to uproot the terror," which was so dramatically disproved in the Lebanon war.

The IDF [Israel Defense Forces] and National Security

My belief in the vision of the new Middle East does not infringe on my utter commitment to our national security. I wholeheartedly believe that all our accomplishments, which are the basis for our future plans, are built on the security and deterrence provided by the IDF.

The peace process and the changes that have occurred in the Middle East have led to a dramatic drop in the threat to Israel's wellbeing from the immediate circle and to a rise in the threat by the outer circle. One problem, which became particularly acute in the Gulf war, is that of our home front's exposure to missiles. This is an issue to which we devote great efforts, both in research and considerable budgets. Israel is today one of the two leading countries in the world in the development of antiballistic missiles and weapons.

However, I would like to make clear that, just like in the past, Israel is in no way preparing for a defensive war. Whoever attacks us will encounter an immediate massive Israeli offensive.

Israel's citizens know that ever since the Camp David accords, our peace agreements have been based on territorial compromise. What is less clear to the public is that security arrangements since those accords have been and will be based on a worst-case scenario. The security arrangements we make will ensure us enough early warning to mobilize troops and prepare them for an eventual sudden attack. Under no peace arrangement will we forgo the strictest warning measures. The camp I represent does not want to rule over a foreign nation and will be prepared to compromise on land in exchange for peace, but under no circumstances will we compromise on our security.

As for the question of terror, I cannot promise that no terrorist will ever infiltrate Israel. At the same time, I am confident that constant pressure on terror and its infrastructure, an intelligence war based on regional and international cooperation, and severe punishment of collaborators will considerably reduce terror and perhaps even eradicate it. The separation plan approved by the government will create conditions that will reduce the danger of terrorist infiltrations to the minimum, and from the Palestinian Authority we will demand to exhibit full responsibility within its boundaries. Nevertheless, if terror continues we will not hesitate to use the IDF anywhere and at any time.

There is only one political camp in this country that can continue the peace process based on security: the camp that initiated it in the first place and dared to carry it out despite all the risks. This is the camp that led the State of Israel to its greatest achievements and created the conditions that today enable us to negotiate peace from a position of power. This is also the only camp that can bring the fruits of the peace process to full fruition.

I am so sorry that Yitzhaq Rabin, who was called upon to make such tough decisions, is not with us and next to me today. Consequently, my mission is 10 times harder. However, one can kill the messenger, but it is hard to kill the message. Today, more than ever before, I feel determined in my belief in the justness of our way, the need and the real possibility Israel has — despite the arduous and painful transition period — to emerge from the old Middle East into a new realm of hope and peace.

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Israel: Baraq Discusses Closure Policy, Talks Prospects

MM0404094596 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 3 Apr 96 p 5

[Interview with Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq by Salamah Ni'mat in Tel Aviv; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Ni'mat] How worried are you about the possible occurrence of further explosions before the Israeli elections take place?

[Baraq] We have no guarantees that further terrorist actions will not take place. But we are doing all we can to prevent such actions. However, terrorist actions might continue to take place and this is a matter of concern to us.

[Ni'mat] So do you admit that the policy of closing the West Bank and the Gaza Strip will not resolve your security problem?

[Baraq] I believe this closure is essential for security reasons. It should continue as long as security conditions demand it. We admit, however, that no measures we take can provide 100 percent guarantees.

[Ni'mat] Do you consider the closure a purely security measure or is it also an act of punishment of the Palestinians?

[Baraq] It is a security measure and is not intended as a collective punishment of the Palestinians or the Palestinian Authority [PA]. Indeed, we have issued orders for making the best possible arrangements, within the framework of the security arrangements, for the passage of basic provisions and any other important humanitarian needs such as medicines.

[Ni'mat] How long will this state of affairs continue?

[Baraq] I do not know. I believe it will continue as long as security considerations dictates. It might go on for a week or a month. But we will do all we can to ease the pressure on the population and alleviate the sufferings they are undergoing, which we do not mean to inflict. We have encouraged the donor countries to provide $100 million for emergency needs to help those who have lost their jobs as a result of the closure. Frankly, in the past, and specifically during the Gulf war, closures were imposed for periods of three to four months. We also imposed an eight-month closure in 1993. During those periods, the Palestinian workers' reliance on the Israeli market diminished.

[Ni'mat] Does this closure constitute part of a policy aimed at reducing the number of Palestinian workers in Israel?

[Baraq] Yes. I believe in the long term the degree of the Palestinian economy's reliance on work in Israel should be reduced and investments should be made in the infrastructure of the territories (the West Bank and the Gaza Strip). Had it not been for the closure, we would have had to reduce the number of Palestinians working in Israel gradually in parallel with the creation of jobs for them in the territories.

[Ni'mat] Will the policies of closure and separation go as far as permitting the Palestinians to set up an independent state?

[Baraq] The separation policy is based on security considerations and is aimed at minimizing daily friction in addition to the economic considerations. We believe that this is better for the Palestinians, besides being a successful policy. This is because it will lead to the Palestinians assuming control over their Palestinian affairs. Separation does not mean isolating the two communities from each other, but rather creating relations of good-neighborliness and economic cooperation and not subservience between them. This has nothing to do with the idea of the establishment of a state. I believe that the right course to be followed is to gradually develop a dialogue between the Palestinians and the Jordanians in the Hashemite Kingdom to determine the type of relationship the two sides want to have between themselves.

Since we have three years to discuss the final status, I believe that if a relationship or a bond is created between the Palestinians and the Jordanians, this would give us a better chance to establish a stable equilibrium together. I am trying to avoid specifying here the form of such a relationship lest we be accused of interfering in anybody's affairs or trying to conspire against anybody.

[Ni'mat] Following the wave of explosions, statements were made intimating that Israel might reoccupy the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Is anybody contemplating such a thing?

[Baraq] Reoccupation? Return to Gaza? I do not believe so. I see no need for this sort of thing. We still consider 'Arafat to be our partner. The main aim of the accord is to establish a responsible Palestinian political entity. It is the duty of the elected leader, and 'Arafat is an elected leader, to ensure that arms are only used by the security and police authorities, since the alternative, in the absence of a responsible political system, would be that anyone who has a different political agenda would resort to force to realize it.

[Ni'mat] Will negotiations with the Palestinians be resumed following the Israeli elections?

[Baraq] I do not know. I hope they will be resumed even before the elections. This question has nothing to do

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with the elections but rather with the terrorist operations, particularly when our people's blood is being shed in this manner, indeed not only our people's blood but also Arab, Romanian, Ethiopian, and American blood has been shed in these operations. This is because the terrorists are blind and harm innocent people. I do not believe that we can resume negotiations under such conditions. This, however, does not mean that we have lost hope in the peace process. We are confident that we have a partner who has done a great deal during the past few weeks, much more than at any time past.

[Ni'mat] Why then do you punish the PA and 'Arafat?

[Baraq] 'Arafat is not responsible for the operations that have taken place, which were perpetrated by Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] and the Islamic Jihad. But the operations were planned in Gaza and were implemented from Ramallah, that is from an area which we are partially responsible for, so that the PA cannot be accused of responsibility for these operations. Some of the terrorist organizations have their headquarters in Damascus and probably some of the orders come from there. Furthermore, the Hizballah party receives its orders from Tehran.

I believe, however, that we will succeed in combating terrorism with the cooperation of the PA and some of the region's countries which participated in the Sharm al-Shaykh conference.

[Ni'mat] When will the negotiations with Syria be resumed?

[Baraq] In view of the change that has taken place in the order of priorities as a result of the terrorist operations, Syria must condemn terrorism. We expect a clear stance that condemns terrorism. Yet we are interested and we have a vested interest in finding a way to resolve our problems with Syria.

[Ni'mat] Does this constitute a precondition for the resumption of negotiations with Syria?

[Baraq] We do not seek to impose any preconditions either on the Syrians or on the Palestinians. However, we expect a denunciation of terrorism. We have a vested strategic interest in the establishment of peace with Syria and we believe that the Syrians too have a vested strategic interest in having peace with Israel. But we will not seek peace at any price or on the basis of any specific timetable.

[Ni'mat] Will not the negotiations occupy a priority position following the Israeli elections?

[Baraq] First we will continue to combat terrorism and then we will revive the peace process.

[Ni'mat] Are you finding any obstacles in respect of the implementation of the Sharm al-Shaykh conference accords?

[Baraq] It is only natural for some obstacles to arise. But I believe that they can be overcome. As you know, a meeting at ministerial level will be held in Washington shortly to follow up the accords. I believe that we can work against terrorism on both the bilateral and multilateral levels.

[Ni'mat] In your dealings with Hamas, do you differentiate between the political wing and the military wing?

[Baraq] We tackle the terrorist elements in Hamas and the Islamic Jihad and terrorism under whatever name. As you know, they have creative talent in matters of inventing names. Hamas' political leadership is responsible for what has happened, as it has knowledge about the operations and encourages them. We do not like Hamas' policies. But should 'Arafat crush the terrorist elements of Hamas and should the political wing express its desire to join the Palestinian political arena, then we would not object to that and we will have no problem with such an arrangement.

[Ni'mat] But Hamas has intimated that it wishes to enter into a dialogue with you.

[Baraq] We cannot negotiate with Hamas because we already have a Palestinian partner. We cannot accept the notion that that partner is only partly in a position of responsibility while another party, which is more responsible for the destruction of our relations, bears the rest of the responsibility. If we were to negotiate with Hamas, then other and more extremist organizations would emerge under new names. The idea behind bestowing a political character on 'Arafat is that he will rise to the level of his commitments as an elected leader.

[Ni'mat] Have you asked 'Arafat to bring Hamas into the political game?

[Baraq] No, we did not, because we are anxious not to interfere in 'Arafat's internal affairs, though some Arab circles accuse us of conspiring in everything. Even if we had our particular views on what would be a better situation in the region, we will continue to ensure that we do not interfere, for Arab societies should resolve their own problems with extremism.

[Ni'mat] What in your view prompted Hamas to abandon its policy of not attacking civilians?

[Baraq] I do not know. But Hamas has committed a grave mistake that made the whole world take action and mobilize capabilities against Hamas. It also made 'Arafat deal with it in the manner he is dealing with it now.

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[Ni'mat] Are you not worried that the closure of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip will only increase extremism?

[Baraq] Every action taken has a good side and a bad side in the short and long terms. Naturally, the closure will have its negative aspects. But it is the duty of every responsible government to safeguard its citizens' lives. We are aware of the fact that 50,000 or 60,000 innocent Palestinians who are only trying to earn their living have fallen victims to this policy. But what can we do if a terrorist infiltrates their ranks? It is a sad situation, but there is no escape from it. We cannot let our people become prey to explosions.

[Ni'mat] Following the recent explosions and on the eve of the elections, the government's policy seems to have become closer to the Likud policy. Will this ensure more votes for you in the elections?

[Baraq] There are no differences between us and the Likud in regard to combating terrorism. We believe that terrorism is above partisanship and its victims belong to all parties and that those fighting terrorism come from all parties. I do not believe the acts of terrorism take into consideration which party is in power. We are trying to drain the swamps and to tackle the problem at its roots in order to preserve peace. But we cannot in practice move toward the entrenchment of peace while our blood is still boiling.

[Ni'mat] Do you deny that the explosions have served the Likud party at your expense?

[Baraq] Undoubtedly they have done so and have placed the government in a delicate position. But the basic objective of the explosions was to subvert peace and all those who support it.

[Ni'mat] What is your policy toward Lebanon? Will you continue to deal with it via Syria?

[Baraq] We plan to hold talks with the Lebanese Government at the right moment. I mean with (Prime Minister Rafiq) al-Hariri and (Foreign Minister) Faris Buwayz and not with Hafiz al-Asad and Faruq al-Shar'. But we understand the situation on the ground and we know that before the Lebanese Government can approach negotiations, it has to get the green light from Damascus. We expect this to take place at some stage. In the meantime, I believe the Lebanese Government can make a positive contribution by imposing its control over Hizballah in the areas to the north of the security belt so as to create a calm situation there for few months. Then it can ask us to embark on negotiations with it within a short time.

[Ni'mat] What do you think of President al-Asad?

[Baraq] He is a capable leader and arouses admiration. It is true that he is a despotic ruler. But he is characterized by patience and precise calculations. He is a serious leader who, naturally, is struggling to serve the interests of Syria and not those of Israel.... The Syrians have been staunch negotiators and opponents. Most of the Syrian leaders have aroused my admiration, such as, for example, Hikmat al-Shihabi with whom I had many hours of meetings. He is equipped with capabilities, shrewdness, a quick mind.... The problem, however, does not lie in persons of high caliber who are led by a capable leader. The problem lies in the extent of their readiness to make peace.

You in Jordan are led by one of the most important leaders in the Middle East...a brave and far-sighted king who committed himself to peacemaking not only on the level of governments but also on the level of peoples. I believe that the same thing can happen in the cases of Syria and Lebanon. We are neighbors and we must respect each other. Peace must be based on the common understanding of the various interests and apprehensions of all of us and on security arrangements that can guarantee peace and security for all sides.

[Ni'mat] What is your policy toward Iraq?

[Baraq] I cannot deny that we do not like Saddam Husayn, who I believe does not contribute anything positive to the region, in fact. He only brought suffering to the Iraqi people starting with his war with Iran through to the Gulf war and ending with the siege and sanctions, in addition to the suppression, persecution, and crushing of freedoms. I believe that history will judge him harshly just as his people do. The time will come when the Iraqi people rebuild their future and their relations with the other countries.

[Ni'mat] Do you think the situation in Iraq will continue as it is now?

[Baraq] I believe the international embargo must continue until the present regime is replaced by a rational regime.

[Ni'mat] Are you happy with your political work, having abandoned the army?

[Baraq] It is an entirely new experience to me and it is somewhat strange. When I was in the army, things were easier, for then you issue orders and they get obeyed. But now, you have to convince people and talk a lot and try to influence the citizens.

[Ni'mat] I heard that you can play the piano.

[Baraq] This is true and it is one of my hobbies. But now I do not have much time to enjoy this hobby.

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Israel: Police Leave Station in Hebron in Anticipation of Pullout

TA0304151596 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 1400 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Preparing to leave Hebron, the Israeli Police this morning moved out of the station inside the town. It has now been relocated on a hill in nearby Qiryat Arba'. A number of policemen remain on duty in Hebron until all Israeli forces pull out. No final decision has been taken on when this will happen. The withdrawal was held up when the West Bank and Gaza Strip were sealed off following the spate of suicide bombings.

Israel: Official Legation To Open in Tunisia 8 Apr

TA0304151296 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 1400 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Israel is to open an official legation in Tunisia next Monday [8 April]. Under the agreement between the two countries, Tunisia's office in Israel will be opened by the middle of next month.

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Jordan: King Returns After Undergoing Successful Ear Surgery

JN0304201096 Amman Jordan Television Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 3 Apr 96

[Announcer-read report over video]

[FBIS Translated Text] Their Majesties King Husayn and Queen Nur returned home from London after his majesty underwent a successful surgery on his middle ear in the United States. His majesty was received by His Highness Prince Ra'd Bin-Zayd, the chief chamberlain; Her Highness Princess Basmah Bint-Talal; their royal highnesses the princes and princesses; the prime minister; the House of Representatives speaker; the Senate president; and a number of ministers and senior civic and military officials.

A number of their royal highnesses the princes and princesses, the chief of the Royal Hashemite Court, and his majesty's military adviser returned with his majesty.

His majesty made statements to reporters about his health and Jordan's stand in support of the Palestinian people.

[Begin recording] [Correspondent Kassab Samawi] Welcome back, your majesty. Everyone here is happy about your safe return. Your majesty, please reassure us about your health?

[Husayn] May God grant us everything that is good, protect us, and justify our presence toward serving our people on the road to a promising future under God's care.

[Samawi] Your majesty, are the symptoms gone?

[Husayn] Praise be to God, my health situation is much better. They told me that in the worst cases, the situation will remain the same, and in the best cases, the situation will become 90 to 95 percent better in terms of hearing and everything else. It just needs some time. However, thanks be to God, the results are very good.

[Samawi] Your majesty, you have always put the worries and issues of the homeland and nation above all considerations, even above personal considerations. You interrupted your trip for medical treatment and returned to the region to participate in the Summit of Peacemakers. With regard to this, will your majesty launch a special initiative to lift the siege of the West Bank?

[Husayn] We will continue to do our utmost to serve, help, and support our kinsfolk and brothers in the West Bank and Gaza — the people of Palestine inside their national territories. We did not and will not tarry in performing our duty. [end recording]

Jordan: King Comments on Surgery, Support for Palestinians

JN0304214896 Amman Jordan Television Network in English 2000 GMT 3 Apr 96

[Announcer-read report over video from the "News at Ten" program]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] His majesty the king flew back home this evening after spending more than two weeks in the United States, where he underwent an ear surgery. The king was greeted by Prince Ra'd Bin-Zayd, who acted as regent, and by Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti, members of the royal family, and high-ranking officials.

His majesty said he was feeling well after the operation he underwent in St. Vincent Hospital in Los Angeles. He said he had regained hearing in his right ear.

[Begin recording] [Husayn] I feel perfect, really. I feel so much better than I have felt for a long, long time. The worst case scenario was that things will remain the way they were, but the best was that they would improve to the possibility of over 90 percent, 95 percent. I already can hear very well with this new eardrum, and the improvement will continue for the next four months, I am told. Then, everything should settle down.

[Correspondent Suzanne 'Afanah] Did you hold any meetings with U.S. officials before or after your operation?

[Husayn] Yes, before the operation. Obviously, I, as you know, came back with the President [Clinton] to the summit in Sharm al-Shaykh, and before that, I had several meetings. And in the last few days, as well, we did meet with some officials in Washington on our way back.

['Afanah] Jordan and Israel have been holding regular meetings lately. Is Jordan going to press Israel to lift the siege on the Palestinians?

[Husayn] I believe that it should be without any doubt that we will do whatever we can to help our Palestinian brethren under all circumstances. I realize there are difficulties. There have been some terrible happenings, and they have resulted in this present situation and enhanced suffering of our Palestinian brethren. But I hope that this will pass very, very soon, and we will do whatever we can towards that end. [end recording]

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Jordan: Peres' Trip to Oman, Qatar Called 'Insult' to Arabs, Muslims

JN0404120596 Amman THE STAR in English 4-10 Apr 96 p 4

["Our Say..." column: "Bitter Legacy of Peace"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Israeli prime minister Shim'on Peres' visit to two Gulf states this week will likely bolster his standing before his own people. And why not? he has acted tough since the wave of suicide bomb attacks which shook the Israeli public and sent the peace process into a bottomless hole. He has slapped an unprecedented siege around the Palestinian territories, now running into its sixth week, bringing the Palestinian economy to its knees and more than 1.5 million Arabs to the brink of starvation. He has reintroduced the notorious policies of house demolition and expulsion of Palestinian activists who oppose the peace process. Israeli soldiers and Palestinian security policy have stormed universities, colleges and villages in pursuit of students and young Palestinians thought to disapprove of 'Arafat's deal with Israel.

Above all, Peres has suspended further negotiations with the Palestinians and postponed idenfinitely Israel's withdrawal from Hebron. His main concern is now to win May's general elections, and in order to hit that point, he has to appear as uncompromising as his opponent, Benyamin Netanyahu, on matters of security and lands. But in doing so, Peres has compromised on the most important component of the peace process; justice.

It is disheartening to see this reversal in Palestinian fortunes while Israel continues to reap the fruits of its half-backed peace with the Arabs. Peres' visit to Oman and Qatar was an insult not only to the Palestinians who are made prisoners of their own homes, but also to all Arabs and Muslims. These countries have shown no sensitivity to the plight of the Palestinians who are being punished collectively.

Peres has his own political agenda. We would be surrendering our fates too easily to the dictat of such an agenda if we, as Arabs, wait and watch, keeping our fingers crossed and praying that Peres, the peacemaker, survives the next elections and resumes the peace process. This would be gullible and naive. Peace in the region must be based on genuine desire by all parties concerned. No one party should be singled out to pay the heavy price of peace in the Middle East—least of all the Palestinians. They have paid enough.

The siege must end immediately and the dialogue must continue. Peres must show acumen and courage if he is to fulfill the prophecy of peace-making. He must also come up boldly and declare that the true sense of peace gives the Palestinians a homeland of their own, and that the land of Palestine can only enjoy peace if the two peoples accept coexistence on equal footing.

On his part, 'Arafat must seize the moment to emerge as the historic leader of his people. The witch hunt has gone far enough, and when Palestinian security men storm universities and colleges, arrest people in hundreds, subject some to torture and others to intimidation, the fine line that once separated the occupier from the liberation fighter becomes fuzzy and unrecognizable. This is not the Palestine that thousands had perished for. 'Arafat's legacy to his people is bitter and revolting.

Jordan: Peres' Referendum Proposal Termed 'Arbitrary Precondition'

JN0304153496 Amman AL-DUSTUR in Arabic 3 Apr 96 pp 1, 20

[Editorial: "Israel's Disavowal of Commitments"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Israel's announcement of a general referendum on the final status formula as a precondition for endorsing this formula is further evidence of the Israeli Government's disavowal of its commitments to the agreements signed with the Palestinians since the fall of 1993. Israel constantly violates the agreements' provisions and deadlines, including the deadline for withdrawal from Hebron. It continues to adopt policies and positions that shake confidence and stir deep doubts regarding its intentions, represented by a frequent shirking of the requirements of the peace process.

Israel's extremely intransigent position on the future of Jerusalem is inconceivable, unacceptable, and unjustifiable, particularly because we are witnessing a feverish settlement drive around the holy city and inside its Arab quarters. This situation cannot be justified under any electoral pretexts and cannot be accepted by Arabs, Muslims, and Palestinians.

Above all, the policy of siege and collective punishment, which has entered its second month, is a coarse violation of the agreements. This policy even poisons the atmosphere of the peace process, shakes its vulnerable foundations, and heralds negative consequences for all parties, including Israel.

By promising a general referendum on the final peace agreement, the Israeli prime minister has stipulated an arbitrary precondition for concluding this agreement with the Palestinian people. We believe this is blackmail and a political move by Israel to disavow the agreements. This will fuel doubts, extremism, and hatred, which will bring the Middle East back to square one and to the pre-Oslo agreements stage.

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Lebanon: Israel's Shahaq Reiterates Support for SLA, Border People

NC0304173596 Kafr Killa Voice of the South in Arabic 1330 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Israeli Chief of Staff General Amnon Shahaq today met with South Lebanese Army [SLA] Commander Major Gen. Antoine Lahd. He gave him Easter greetings and asked him to convey his wishes to all SLA personnel. Shahaq reiterated his country's commitment to the security of the border area and the future of its population.

Gen. Shahaq met with Lahd during a tour of the border area accompanied by the commander of the northern region Maj. Gen. 'Amiram Levin. During the tour, Gen. Shahaq also met with the Israeli soldiers operating in the border area and expressed holiday good wishes.

Lebanon: Hizballah Statement Criticizes Oman, Qatar for Receiving Peres

NC0404072196 Ba'labakk Voice of the Oppressed in Arabic 0530 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Hizballah has stressed that resistance is the only course to be followed to halt the retreat and collapse in the Arab position, which was forcefully manifested by the enemy prime minister's visit to the Gulf region.

Commenting on this visit, Hizballah has issued the following statement:

The disgraceful visit by the enemy prime minister to Qatar and Oman following the Sharm al-Shaykh conference was merely a U.S.-Israeli attempt to push international policies in the region in a direction that ensures U.S. hegemony and Zionist superiority over as much geographical space as possible. It is shameful that the doors of these countries were opened to a criminal who still has the blood of civilian martyrs in Yatar on his hands, a man who remains the usurper of Palestine and Jerusalem — from where God's prophet ascended to heaven — and who occupies land in the south and the Golan.

The Hizballah statement strongly condemned some regimes for opening their doors to the Zionist prime minister and called on their free peoples to express the dismay and anger in their hearts so as to highlight the true will of the whole nation, which refuses to recognize the enemy's legitimacy or to effect reconciliation with him.

The statement said: The acts of martyrdom carried out by freemen in the Islamic Resistance and Islamic Jihad in Palestine and Lebanon are the option that matches the nation's resources and hopes; they are not suicidal acts. What the servile regimes are doing and their pursuit of policies of capitulation and subservience to the Zionist enemy are the suicidal acts. This is the course of suicide, even the course of butchering the fate of peoples on the altar of the capitulationist regimes.

Hizballah's statement noted that the policy of capitulationist negotiations with the Zionist enemy has resulted in more collapse and deterioration. The occupied territories remain under Zionist occupation, Zionist repression and terrorism are escalating, and the independent state remains a mere slogan that cannot be turned into reality in view of the full Zionist control of the course and development of events.

It added: These results, which are daily becoming more apparent, are evidence of the futility of the policy of negotiations and even of its suicidal negativeness. Hence, resistance, and resistance alone, is the right course the adoption of which will halt the retreat and collapse, uphold the nation's dignity, and create the necessary conditions for redressing the imbalance and inequity by mobilizing the factors of latent strength. The enemy is exploiting the agreements already concluded to break its political and economic isolation and expand its presence and relations as a prelude to expanding its hegemony.

Comparing the two policies, that of the resistance shows that remaining committed to justice and to the struggle for the sake of it is better than abandoning it. It is better than capitulation, which has made its architects Israel's security officers.

Concluding, the Hizballah statement said that the perfidious measures taken by the Omani and Qatari regimes on the basis of their submissiveness to U.S. hegemony and their shortsighted political wagering do not reflect the real popular will and its continuing hostility to the Zionist entity. Resistance remains the true expression of the nation's will.

Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah has said we are living in a phase in which the Arabs now lack political, economic, and security weight.

Speaking at a Koranic tutoring lesson, his eminence said the visit by Shim'on Peres, the enemy's prime minister, to the Gulf was an election card, stressing that any action to bring down the enemy is an act of jihad and martyrdom. He added that the enemy is in a predicament because it does not have the freedom of movement to carry out its military operations inside Lebanon. There are political and security obstacles he cannot overcome, especially as the Labor Party's election prospects will be affected by the mujahidin's shelling of settlements and

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the threat to settlers there. This might cost the Labor Party all these votes.

Lebanon: Union Decides To Hold Sit-In Despite Government Disapproval

NC0304213096 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 1915 GMT 3 Apr 96

[Statement by Ilyas Abu-Rizq, president of the Lebanese General Labor Federation, following the Executive Council meeting in Beirut on 3 April—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The union movement has decided to hold a sit-in in front of the Chamber of Deputies building to protest government policy. In reaching its decision, the union movement considered, first, the nation's higher interests; then, its persistence in its valid search for means of livelihood and freedom in all its forms. The union movement has not gone back on its decision to hold strikes and demonstrations as a Constitutionally guaranteed right; however, based on higher national considerations, it has adopted an additional method in its struggle. It has called for holding a protest sit-in.

While the conferees understand and appreciate all the observations made by the friends of the union and popular movement, they have expressed astonishment at the campaign launched by the adversaries of the union movement's legitimate rights — a campaign that by equating a civilized, peaceful sit-in with serving the interests of the Israeli enemy jumped to serious conclusions. [passage omitted]

[In a related report, Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic at 1530 GMT on 3 April says: "Defense Minister Muhsin Dallul has announced that the labor sit-in in front of the Chamber of Deputies will not take place. He said he fully trusts the leadership of the General Labor Federation, which will decide not to stage the sit-in. He noted that this sit-in was denounced and rejected by all political, religious, and economic leaders. He stressed that the Army is working to render the visit a success, and will not allow anyone to try to sour this visit, which helps efforts to remove the Israeli occupation"]

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Syria: Pakistani Minister Arrives, Says Bhutto To Visit Syria

JN0304185396 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1515 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Shahid Hassan Khan, Pakistani minister of state and special economic adviser to the Pakistani prime minister, arrived in Damascus this afternoon on a visit to Syria.

The Pakistani minister was received by 'Abd-al-Rahim al-Subay'i, minister of state for planning affairs, senior Planning Ministry officials, the Pakistani ambassador in Damascus, and embassy staff.

Shahid Hassan Khan told the SYRIAN ARAB NEWS AGENCY correspondent that he is pleased about visiting Syria. He said that this visit is to prepare for a visit by Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to Syria later this month. [passage omitted]

Syria: Commentary Says Chances for Peace Deal 'Narrowing'

JN0304175496 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1135 GMT 3 Apr 96

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Although five years have elapsed since the peace process was launched at the Madrid conference, peace has not yet prevailed in the region. On the contrary, the gateways leading to this peace have narrowed. This means that the chances and probabilities of realizing peace have become slimmer. Those who want peace for the region and sincerely seek to realize it have to look for the reasons behind this regrettable result. Looking for the reasons does not require much effort. One objective look is enough to find them.

The peace process that was launched at the Madrid conference is based on clear-cut foundations. It is based on international legitimacy and its resolutions. Israel does not want to abide by these principles. It continues to reject the logic that people have a right to their land, borders, sovereignty, and dignity.

Therefore, to avoid peace, its bases, and requirements, Israel set out to obstruct the peace process. It even suspended the Maryland talks. In other words, Israel practically eliminated any possibility to advance toward peace, placing the entire peace process in a bottleneck.

President Hafiz al-Asad stated that Syria firmly supports just and comprehensive peace. However, it was Israel that obstructed the negotiations, hampered any progress on the basis of international legitimacy resolutions, and then suspended the negotiations. The president said: Israel does not abide by the bases of the peace process. It seems that it has not yet decided to realize peace in accordance with the international legitimacy resolutions. Unless there is a shift in Israel's position, it will be impossible to achieve the cherished peace in the region, considering that the chances of peace are clearly narrowing.

Just and comprehensive peace in the region cannot be realized unless international legitimacy resolutions, which stipulate the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces from the Golan and southern Lebanon, are implemented. Otherwise, peace will not be realized. Those who ask the Arabs to relinquish their lands, sovereignty, and dignity do not want peace but want the Arabs to surrender. Those who want the Arabs to accept the occupation neither want peace nor seek to realize it. Those who claim that people who defend their land are wrong and are terrorists, and those who ask others to condemn these people do not want just peace to prevail in the region. Past experience has proved this.

The peace that the Arab nation accepts is that of international legitimacy. Syria, whose positions speak for the man on the street in the Arab world, only wants the international community to abide and honor its resolutions and to make every possible effort to implement them. Implementing international resolutions does not happen by pampering the party that rejects these resolutions. This happens by pressuring the party and forcing it to submit to international legitimacy.

Peace in the Middle East no longer serves individual or regional interests only. Instead, it serves international interests and directly affects relations and interests of the international community and world security and stability. Ensuring respect for international legitimacy in the Middle East will be the beginning and the basis for ensuring its respect in other parts of the world. This will lay down the basis for international security and stability and for more solid international relations based on respect.

Syria: Press Says Chances for Peace 'Dwindling'

JN0404091896 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0450 GMT 4 Apr 96

[Press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] In its editorial, TISHRIN speaks about the retreat in the peace process as a result of Israeli obstruction. The paper calls for a new approach to save this process.

The paper adds: President Hafiz al-Asad was clear at the joint news conference with President Mubarak. President al-Asad dotted the i's regarding Israeli responsi-

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bility for the obstruction of the peace process. He said the Israelis have not yet made a decision on the peace process.

TISHRIN says Israel has consistently obstructed the peace process. The last action taken by Israel to obstruct this process is withdrawing its negotiating team from the Maryland talks on the Syrian track and suspending these talks. Instead of implementing the resolutions of international legitimacy and the U.S. initiative, Israel started to make proposals that are far removed from the requirements of peace, such as the peace-for-peace concept. Israel also sought to drag out the negotiations so it can plant the occupied territory with settlements and settlers. Rabin's previous proposals are good evidence of this policy. These proposals gave precedence to security over peace and talked about partial solutions, separate deals, referendum, and other issues that do not have anything to do with the requirements of peace.

TISHRIN adds: Peres is today following in Rabin's footsteps regarding security affairs. Peres is appeasing extremists and settlers by taking a hard line. He is escalating the situation, maintaining the military siege imposed on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and heating up the situation in southern Lebanon through daily attacks. At the same time, gives precedence to the elections over peace.

The paper concludes: Saving the peace process requires a new method and different stands from the Israeli proposals. Israel is far removed from this. Therefore, peace is now out of reach.

AL-BA'TH says thanks to Israel, the peace process is now in a critical stage. The rulers of Israel have grown accustomed to violating international laws and charters, disregarding commitments, and trampling on the resolutions of international legitimacy. Why are those who promoted Israeli interests and carried the Israelis on their shoulders to the halls of the peace talks silent about what is happening to the peace process? Why do those people view our region with one eye, which is the Israeli eye? Whatever happened to fairness and honesty on the part of those who volunteered to help achieve a just and comprehensive peace?

AL-BA'TH also asks: How can efforts for a just, comprehensive peace be compatible with offering all kinds of assistance, support, and armament to the side that is evading the peace process and that opposes its principles and goal? How can we reconcile claims about fighting terrorism with support for occupation, annexation, expansion, and state terrorism?

AL-BA'TH says: Despite all of this, we can say that the chance to establish a just, comprehensive peace is still available. However, this chance is now very narrow and can't remain forever. Those who are concerned about the objective of the peace process and who want to save the region from bloody conflicts and the cycle of violence, terrorism, and wars are called upon to stop the Israeli dovish plotting against the peace process. Those people should also adopt a fair, neutral attitude in favor of peace. Their efforts should not be based on selfish and election interests.

AL-BA'TH asserts that peace is a major issue, not a passing matter. All countries and international quarters should work for it.

The paper concludes: No matter how critical and hard the current stage is, peace cannot be based on injustice. Any peace that is not just and that does not respond to the interests of the people will not last. Power alone cannot create legitimacy, nor strip the people of their rights. For any people to accept a viable peace, this depends, first and foremost, on justice, equality, dignity, and security for all.

AL-THAWRAH says Israel has closed all doors to reviving the peace process. President al-Asad made it very clear that Israel is to blame for obstructing the peace process and that the Israelis have not yet made a decision on the peace process. President al-Asad also said: Although around five years have passed since the Madrid conference, neither peace nor anything like it has been achieved. The reason is that Israel does not comply with UN resolutions and does not heed the logic that every people have their land, boundaries, sovereignty, and dignity.

AL-THAWRAH adds: The whole world knows that Israel's insistence on this provocative policy aims at marginalizing international resolutions and aborting the U.S. initiative. Consequently, Israel wants to defeat any solution that guarantees for the Arabs their land and rights in full.

AL-THAWRAH says this means that the chance for peace is dwindling. The situation in the region is open for all possibilities of tension and explosion. Therefore, those who care about peace and stability must urgently resuscitate the peace process and make Israel understand that its old policy will lead to the collapse of hopes for peace and will make it very difficult, if not impossible, to reach a solution.

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Afghanistan

Afghanistan: UN Envoy Mestiri Arrives in Kabul

LD0304161196 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Dari 1430 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Mahmoud Mestiri, special envoy of the UN secretary-general for Afghanistan, arrived in Kabul today.

BAKHTAR reported that Mestiri was welcomed at Kabul by officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mestiri, when interviewed in Kabul, expressed optimism concerning his coming round of talks in Kabul and said that positive grounds had been created for the restoration of peace. He said: The United Nations is planning to transfer its offices to inside Afghanistan.

During his stay in Kabul, Mestiri will meet and hold talks with the leadership authorities of the Islamic State of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan: UN Peace Envoy Says Taleban 'Ready To Talk' With Kabul

BK0304121796 Hong Kong AFP in English 1208 GMT 3 Apr 96

[Report by Marc Lavine]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KABUL, April 3 (AFP) — The Taleban militia who have been trying to seize Kabul for six months have for the first time offered to hold talks with the government, UN peace envoy Mahmoud Mestiri said Wednesday [3 April].

"The number two of the Taleban, Mohammed Rabbani, told us his movement was ready to negotiate," he told reporters on a six-hour flying visit to the Afghan capital, Kabul.

"They say they are ready to talk tomorrow, and these words are in the mouth of the Taleban for the very first time," he added before putting the proposal to Afghan President Borhanoddin Rabbani.

"If the Taleban are ready to talk and President Rabbani is ready to talk then this is already something," he said.

"I'm confident our talks will be positive because President Rabbani is always ready to talk abou' and to start negotiations," he added.

If the Taleban offer for talks on tranferring power from Rabbani's government and ending fighting around Kabul is serious, the move would mark a significant change in the militiamen's policy, analysts said.

In the past the Islamic fighters have refused to hold negotiations with the government and repeatedly said they would not consider sharing power with any faction. They have been encamped on three major fronts around Kabul for six months, vowing to topple the government and impose Islamic law across the country.

Mestiri, who was last here in January, said he was in the battered capital to "see how President Rabbani sees the situation and to find his position on working with others."

He said there were signs of optimism for an end to the factional fighting and bloodshed of the past four years.

"We see some ways of action to have peace as Afghans have realised that the only way to reach peace is through negotiations, while their leaders have also realised that this is the only way to achieve their ambitions," he said.

The former Tunisian foreign minister stressed that the United Nations was "very much in a hurry" to see a peaceful solution being brokered between the warring factions.

"We cannot see how it is possible today to have one faction controlling the whole country," he said.

Mestiri's trips are part of his two-year-long battle to find a peaceful solution to Afghanistan's long-running civil war, a battle which looks far from being won, observers said.

His latest round of shuttle diplomacy is also to take him to the strongholds of other Afghan leaders, including the Taleban base in the southern city of Kandahar and the northern base of ethnic-Uzbek warlord Abdol Rashid Dostum, officials said.

Afghanistan: Taleban Reportedly Ready for 'Direct Peace Talks'

LD0404093096 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 0857 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] TEHRAN April 4 (ITAR-TASS) — The Islamic movement Taleban is ready for direct peace talks with its foe — Afghan President Borhanoddin Rabbani, Mahmoud Mestiri, the U.N. Secretary-General's Special Representative in Afghanistan, stated in Kabul on Thursday [4 April].

"The Taleban told me that they are prepared for talks at any moment. it is the first time we heard such a thing from them," Mestiri told correspondents.

The UN chief's representative pointed out that he will seek to get agreement from the Taleban about a specific data for the start of such talks. Earlier, the Taleban sought to capture Kabul, overthrow the Rabbani regime and establish a purely Islamic rule in Afghanistan.

At present, the Taleban are in control of 50 per cent of the country's territory and have been besieging the

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capital since October last year, subjecting it to frequent artillery and missile bombardments.

Mestiri pointed out that at present three most powerful groups — the Rabbani government, the Taleban movement, and forces led by General Rashid Dostam in the country's north — display readiness for negotiations. However, he pointed out that foreign interference was also practised.

In particular, there is interference, and rather considerable, too, on the part of Pakistan. Many other countries also interfere in Afghan affairs, quite often with the aid of weapons, Mestiri emphasised.

Afghanistan: Rabbani Meets With Peace, Islamic Fraternity Front Members

LD0304221796 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Esteemed professor Borhanoddin Rabbani, president of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, this morning met members of the Peace and Islamic Fraternity Front.

The presidential press office reported to BAKHTAR that at this meeting our country's president, in addressing the members of this Front, said: Afghanistan is hoping that the voice of peace echoes from the pulpits of mosques and from national and international platforms, so that this voice echoes all over the country.

The government is ready to put in practice what you recommend and to spare no effort to end the fighting and to restore a nationwide peace in the country.

The Afghan president added: The government respects your neutrality, and hence you are required to raise much higher the voice of peace in order to secure peace. [passage omitted]

Afghanistan: Kabul Rocket Attacks Leave 1 Dead, 5 Injured

LD0304152296 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Dari 1430 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] As a result of the landing of rockets, one person was killed and another five were injured in Kabul city.

BAKHTAR reports that over last night and today, 12 rockets were fired on the city's residential areas, killing one and injuring five citizens of Kabul. Four residential houses also sustained damage.

Afghanistan: Rocket Kills Pakistani Officer in Ghazni Province

LD0304213096 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A motor vehicle carrying two Pakistani officers was recently the target of a rocket attack in Ghazni Province. One of the passengers was killed on the spot.

Reports received by BAKHTAR say that the Datsun car of these Pakistani officers, who had come to Ghazni Province from Kandahar, was hit by an RPG rocket in the area of Dasht-e Lala Saheb, as a result of which one of the officers was killed on the spot and the other officer, who sustained serious injuries, was transferred to Kandahar.

The perpetrators of this incident were not identified and had fled the scene. It was reported that since the recent landing of Pakistani planes at Kandahar airport, many Pakistani officers have been seen in the areas under the control of the Taleban group.

Afghanistan: Over 200,000 Refugees Return to Kabul

LD0304222096 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] During the past week, 205,503 refugees returned to Kabul city and 85,580 individuals left the city for Jalalabad.

Quoting a source of the UNHCR [UN High Commissioner for Refugees], BAKHTAR reported that between 24 and 31 March, 1996, 3,510 families, consisting of 205,503 individuals, returned to Kabul via the Kabul-Jalalabad highway and settled in various wards of Kabul city. Conversely, 1,432 families, consisting of 85,580 individuals, left Kabul for the eastern provinces of the country and for Peshawar.

The report says that during this period, 39,000 tonnes of foodstuffs and fuel have been imported to Kabul by traders and private investors; and 1,207 tonnes of foodstuffs have been brought to Kabul from Jalalabad by the charity organizations.

The source added that as the convoys passed along the highway there were no demands for money from anyone.

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Afghanistan: Kabul Dismisses Taleban Holy War as Sign of Division

BK0404102996 Hong Kong AFP in English 1006 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, April 4 (AFP) — The Afghan Government Thursday [4 April] dismissed the Taleban militia's declaration of a holy war on Kabul as "ridiculous" and as a clear sign of an internal rift in the Islamic movement.

The Taleban launched the war, or jehad, on Wednesday and refused outright to negotiate an end to fighting around besieged Kabul, just a day after UN peace envoy to Afghanistan Mahmoud Mestiri told the government that the militiamen were ready for talks "tomorrow."

Officials here said the apparent stark contradiction between the message conveyed by a top Taleban cadre to Mestiri and the one issued at a major meeting of Muslim clerics, or ulemas, in the movement's southern stronghold at Kandahar, simply served to highlight an ideological struggle within the faction.

The ulemas had criticised the "un-Islamic" character of President Borhanoddin Rabbani's regime, Afghan sources said.

"The two vastly contrasting signals show that the divisions between the two opposing strands within the Taleban leadership are now coming to the fore," a Foreign Ministry source told AFP.

"The more conciliatory camp is saying the movement should talk to the government about ending the fighting, while the other seems to be bent on mindlessly waging war at whatever cost," he said.

"In any case, a Taleban jehad on the government or its senior officials is ridiculous. It is nothing new and is quite meaningless as it is obvious that they are unable to seize Kabul from us," he added.

In the past two years the Taleban has conquered most of the southern part of Afghanistan but have failed to capture the capital, Kabul, which is defended by forces of the regime's military strongman, Ahmad Shah Mas'ud.

Since October Taleban forces have been entrenched in hills overlooking the south of Kabul from where they sporadically shell the capital.

One diplomat however urged caution in taking the call for a holy war too lightly, saying: "In this part of the world, it is an extremely serious move."

The official said that indirect talks between the Taleban and Kabul were continuing through the intermediary of a powerful neutral political group based in the eastern city of Jalalabad.

"This fact further shows up the inconsistencies in their latest statement and the cracks in their organisation," he said, adding that Kabul was ready to honour an earlier offer to hold talks with the Islamic warriors who are trying to topple the government.

Wednesday's declaration from Kandahar was a severe embarrassment to Mestiri who less than 24 hours earlier had told Rabbani of the militiamen's offer of talks, observers said.

Mestiri told reporters before meeting Rabbani that the Taleban's second-in-command had for the first time proposed negotiations on ending the tense military stand-off between the two sides south of Kabul.

"They say they are ready to talk tomorrow, and these words are in the mouth of the Taleban for the very first time," he said during his latest flying visit to Kabul.

Members of Mestiri's two-year-old peace mission — which has frequently been slammed by officials here for being out of touch and ineffectual — were not immediately available for comment.

The Taleban have been encamped on three major fronts around Kabul for six months, vowing to topple the government and to impose Islamic law across the whole country.

The Kandahar meeting, attended by ulemas from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, also pledged allegiance to Taleban leader, Mullah Omar, and declared him the Amir-al-Momineen, the emir of Afghan believers.

Afghanistan has been torn apart by a bloody conflict since 1992, when the mujahedin groups, who forced out Afghanistan's Soviet-backed government, began battling each other for power.

Afghanistan: Differences Reported Among Taleban Factions

LD0304201596 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Differences are intensifying among the various factions of the Taleban group with each passing day.

Reports say that men attached to [Taleban leader] Mola Mohammad Rabbani have recently been withdrawn from the battlefronts in Maydan Shar and replaced by men attached to Mola Borjan [another Taleban leader].

This action was taken following clashes which flared up in Kandahar and Herat provinces among the Taleban group.

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Bangladesh

Bangladesh: President Swears In Interim Government

BK0304125696 Hong Kong AFP in English 1239 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] DHAKA, April 3 (AFP) — President Abdur Rahman Biswas on Wednesday [3 April] swore in 10 advisors who will run Bangladesh with neutral interim leader Muhammad Habibur Rahman until new elections can be held, official sources said.

The ceremony came as troops started returning to barracks after being deployed to prevent the country's longstanding political strife turning into a more serious conflict.

Biswas administered the oath to the advisors at a simple ceremony at the Bangabhaban presidential palace, the sources said.

The 10 include, Muhammad Yunus, a leading economist and head of the Grameen Bank, Shagufta Bukht Chowdhury, a former governor of the Bangladesh Bank and retired army major general Abdur Rahman Khan, the sources said.

Presidential officials could not be reached to immediately confirm the appointments.

Rahman took over under a constitutional amendment passed last week, so all future general elections are held under a neutral caretaker administration. He can have a maximum of 10 advisors.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia resigned at the weekend amid a mounting opposition campaign and the appointments came as observers expressed concern that a delay could cause problems in stabilising the political situation.

Elections are expected in May or early June but the deadline is June 28.

Troops started withdrawing from Dhaka and the key port of Chittagong, two weeks after they were deployed to restore order amid the political tension, defence sources said.

Zia had ordered troops out to maintain law and urgent supplies.

Bangladesh was paralysed by the indefinite non-cooperation campaign, which started March 9 and ended with the prime minister's resignation.

This was the second time the army had been deployed since general elections in February which were marred by violence and an opposition boycot.

The stayed out of the long-running political standoff between the opposition and Zia. Formerly a prominent force in politics, the armed forces have taken a back seat since the restoration of democracy in 1991.

In Chittagong, Port Chairman Zahiruddin Mahmud confirmed that troops were being withdrawn. He said the jam created by the opposition strike would be cleared within a week.

"The port is operating around the clock," he said.

Bangladesh: Portfolios of Caretaker Ministers Announced

BK0304164396 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network in English 1600 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Ten advisers of the caretaker government have been sworn in. President Abdur Rahman Biswas administered the oath of office to the newly appointed advisers at a simple ceremony at Bangabhaban [president's house] this afternoon. The chief adviser of the nonparty caretaker, Mr. Muhammad Habibur Rahman, was present on the occasion. Cabinet Secretary Ayubur Rahman conducted the oath taking ceremony.

The advisers and their portfolios are:

Chief Adviser Muhammad Habibur Rahman — Cabinet Division, Establishment, Home, Foreign Affairs, Information, Election Commission Secretariat and Special Affairs Division.

Barrister Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed — Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Local Government, Rural Development, and Cooperatives.

Professor Muhmmad Yunus — Science and Technology, Primary and Mass Education, and Environment.

Professor Mohammad Shamsul Haq — Education, Youth and Sports and Cultural Affairs.

Shaugfta Bakth Chowdhury — Industries, Commerce, Jute and Textiles.

A.Z.N. Nasiruddin — Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Livestock, Disaster Management, and Relief and (?Land).

Retired Major General Abdur Rahman Khan — Health and Family Welfare, and Religious Affairs.

Dr. (Rahibuddin Mahmud) — Finance and Planning.

Syed Manzur Elahi — Communications, Shipping, Civil Aviation and Tourism, Ports and Telecommunication, Housing and Public Works.

Dr. Nazma Chowdhury — Labor and Manpower, Social Welfare, Women and Children Affairs.

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Dr. (Jamilurezza Chowdhury) — Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources and Water Resources.

Talking to waiting newsmen afterwards, President Abdur Rahman Biswas expressed his satisfaction over the formation of the council of advisers headed by Chief Adviser Habibur Rahman. He hoped that the new advisers will contribute their utmost national progress, as well as ensuring the holding of next parliamentary elections in a free, fair and impartial manner.

The chief adviser told the newsmen that their task will be the improvement of law and order situation and streamlining the administration in the greater interest of the country.

India

India: Army Chief Comments on Continuing Kashmir Hostage Saga

BK0404085596 Hong Kong AFP in English 0732 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Srinagar, India, April 4 (AFP) — The abduction of four Western hostages by Moslem militants in Kashmir entered its 10th month Thursday, as fresh unrest in the state deflected attention from the kidnappings.

Kashmir officials maintain that the captives — Britons Paul Wells and Keith Mangan, American Donald Hutchings and German Dirk Hasert — appear to be safe and unharmed.

"A week back we were told by authorities that all four tourists are somewhere in the south-east of Kashmir and alive," Brigadier P.P.S. Bindra, the Indian army chief in Kashmir, told AFP.

"We have made sure that our troops do not go near them for their own safety and we understand that armed foreign mercenaries are still with them," he said.

A shadowy rebel group called Al-Faran kidnapped the tourists between July 4 and 8 last year near the Kashmiri resort of Pahalgam. The captors beheaded a fifth hostage, Norwegian Hans- Christian Ostro, in August.

Kashmiri leaders said the kidnapping — the longest involving foreigners in the Himalayan province — had taken a backseat with renewed violence in the face of upcoming general elections in the state, the first in six years.

"It (the kidnapping) is an old issue," a Moslem cleric said in this summer capital. "We h@ve forgotten about the hostages as we are more concerned about the present upsurge in killings by security forces in Kashmir."

Political observer Abdul Majid echoed the sentiment, saying parliamentary elections in Kashmir slated for May 7, 23 and 30 had deflected attention from the abduction. Moslem militants have vowed to sabotage the polls.

Al-Faran has demande@ the release of 15 jailed colleagues in return for the hostages and spurned repeated appeals to free them from their families, their governments and New Delhi.

Al-Faran claims the Indian army took three hostages after a firefight on December 4 near the southern Kashmir town of Dabran in which a top rebel leader was killed.

It said a fourth unidentified hostage had been missing@since then. The army confirms the gunbattle but denies holding hostages.

There has been no public sighting of the western hostages for weeks. However US Congressman Bill Richardson, who visited Kashmir in late February, said the four were alive and that the crisis would end soon.

Indian officials say Al-Faran is a front for Harkat-ul-Ansar, a guerrilla group of mainly Afghan mercenaries which kidnapped two British trekkers in Kashmir in June 1993 and released them unharmed after 17 days.

Moslem rebels fighting Indian rule in Kashmir, the country's only Moslem-majority state, have kidnapped scores of Indians and about 10 foreigners since the separatist drive escalated in 1989.

The Indian hostages include a former lawmaker who spent a year in captivity before his release in June 1994. Two Swedish engineers workin@ in Kashmir were seized in March 1991 and freed after 97 days.

The Moslem separatist drive in Kashmir has claimed more than 12,000 lives since 1989. India accuses Pakistan, which administers part of the state, of fomenting insurgency. Islamabad denies the charge.

India: Prime Minister Rao Seeks To Secure Support of Muslim Clergy

BK0304150996 Delhi INDIAN EXPRESS in English 31 Mar 96 p 9

[Report by Bhaskar Roy]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In a quiet move Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao has sought to secure the support of a section of the Muslim clergy by offering what appears to be a virtual apology for the past "mistakes".

Keen to enlist the backing of the prominent Ulemas [religious scholars] before the elections, Rao has held

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separate parleys with groups of religious leaders over the past two days.

At a meeting with a group of Muslim leaders led by Syed Ahmed Bukhari, the Naib Imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid [mosque], yesterday, the prime minister apparently asked for an opportunity to correct what might have gone wrong.

Desperate for Muslim support, he admitted lapses but pleaded for a chance to complete the "unfinished work".

"Galti insaan se hi hoti hai farishton se nehin" (only human beings are prone to mistakes, not the angels), Rao reportedly told his audience in chaste Urdu.

He is understood to have assured the Ulemas that his government would abide by the Supreme Court judgement in the Babri Masjid dispute and implement it without any delay.

In a tone perceived by his audience as sincere and candid, Rao stressed that the issues of Muslims' economic development and education would receive his full attention.

Rao's admission of mistakes assumed immense political significance in view of the demand even from a section of senior Congress functionaries to extend an apology to the minorities for the Centre's inability to prevent the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

Interacting with a delegation of the Islamic Council of India today, Rao agreed to examine the demands for reservation for Muslims, implementation of the Supreme Court order for the Imams' salaries and reconstitution of the Wakf Boards and Haj committees to give adequate representation to the Sunni sect.

In another interesting development an all-India conference of Ulemas and Mashaikhs organised by the council here today pointed to the "ominous prospects" of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] coming to power at the Centre because of division among the Muslims and decided to support the Congress.

Though N.K. Sharma, a close Rao aide on Muslim affairs, was behind it, the conference was attended by a number of prominent Ulemas from different parts of the country.

The deliberations, interrupted several times by angry protests from the audience, however, zeroed in on the dangers of "Maharashtra (under the Sena-BJP rule) being repeated on a larger scale" and concluded with a call to support the Congress.

The Naib Imam apparently assured Rao that the appeal from Jama Masjid to the Muslim electorate this time would contain no opposition to the Congress. In the past two Lok Sabha elections the Imam's fatwa [Islamic legal ruling] had gone against the party.

India: Russian Foreign Minister's New Delhi Visit Reviewed

BK0404052596

[FBIS Report] Three dailies on 1 April carry news of Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov's two-day visit to New Delhi.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS carries a 600-word article on page 9 by K.P. Nayar, which predicts that Primakov will remain foreign minister, even after the elections, thereby "providing a continuing link" for ties with other nations. This brings significance to Primakov's visit, because discussions between Indian leaders and the Russian foreign minister will have a bearing on Indian-Russian relations beyond the presidential elections in Russia. In light of this, Nayar applauds India's "frank and forthright" dealings with Primakov.

Nayar cites Primakov's strong relations with other Russian officials. He says that "the Russian foreign minister's popularity across the political spectrum in Russia is obvious from the fact that he has faced no criticism...in the State Duma."

During his talks with Primakov, Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee expressed India's opposition to NATO expansion. Nayar says that "the identity of views between India and Russia on NATO must be seen in the wider context of U.S. attempts to contain Russia." He adds that the United States has been trying to pressure Moscow into "jettisoning its concept of 'near abroad,' which accords primacy in Russian foreign policy to Moscow's interests within the Commonwealth of Independent States." Nayar says this is a matter of concern for India, because Washington is not aiming to create a neutral zone. Any U.S. attempt to contain Russia should be of concern to India, which has vital stakes in Central Asia. Nayar says that India is not alone in its concerns. When the Iranian Foreign Minister, 'Ali Akbar Velayati, was in Moscow, he expressed similar views on the expansion of NATO, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and the situation in Central Asia.

"There is an unprecedented consensus developing among some of the major players on the Asian scene — China, Iran, Russia and India — on the international situation in the post-Cold War era," Nayar warns.

BUSINESS STANDARD carries a 650-word article by Jyoti Malhotra on page 15, entitled "Indian Days in the Kremlin." Malhotra opens the article by saying that "Russia is back as one of the cornerstones of Indian foreign policy." Malhotra cites the significance of India

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being the first non-CIS country to which Yevgeniy Primakov has visited since his appointment.

Malhotra sees this visit as a change in relations with Russia. Indian-Russian ties went into a "cold freeze" after the fall of the Soviet Union. Russia has now "fallen to the standard of a Third World nation, India is increasingly becoming a fixture in the mind of the foreign investor."

Primakov's visit is seen as a return to "'Indian Days' in the Kremlin all over again." In the 1980s, Primakov was the head of the Institute for Oriental Studies, and the current chief of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service used to be an official in the Russian embassy in New Delhi for many years.

While in New Delhi, Primakov discussed Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. India is seeking an ally to help it in that region and "Russia is one such player."

An editorial entitled "Primakov Comes Calling," published in THE ASIAN AGE on page 8 hails Yevegniy Primakov's visit, but knows that there is "no going back to the bonhomie of yesteryear." The editorial chastises Primakov for bringing up "sensitive issues" — the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The editorial warns that India's position on these two subjects is "very consistent" and that it will not change its mind.

The editorial harks back to the strong ties New Delhi and Moscow shared in the past, but points out that "the Kremlin is no longer what it used to be," as Boris Yeltsin "faces a crisis of credibility." In conclusion, the editorial says that "New Delhi may not play ball with Moscow."

India: Editorial Views Significance of Visit by Russia's Primakov

BK0404074496 Delhi HINDUSTAN in Hindi 2 Apr 96 p 6

[Editorial: "The Russian Foreign Minister's Visit"]

[FBIS Translated Text] It could be just a coincidence that after a gap of five years, Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov decided to visit just as India's general elections are around the corner and the Russian elections are not far off either. This timing should not belittle the importance of his visit. On his last visit to India, he signed many favorable agreements concerning the Indian-Soviet League's business transactions. This time he again signed favorable contracts with India and initiated others, which are no less important. We do not need to flamboyantly show off the close relations between New Delhi and Moscow. This was the first time the two countries have been directly linked or signed important agreements concerning the two countries' closer cooperation in science and technology fields.

Mr. Primakov is not new to India, nor is India an unfamiliar country for him. That is why it was so surprising when he suggested India change its stand on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty [CTBT]. He said he would be delighted for India to do so. India's stand on these treaties has been unambiguous. India was one of the original architects of the CTBT, however, it is no longer prepared to accept the self- contradictory arguments put forth by the United States and its Western allies, which favor the enforcement of the treaties. What baffles diplomatic observers is why Primakov should advocate India changing its stand. Primakov always supported India's stand on the Kashmir issue and pleaded fervently on India's behalf for it to receive permanent membership in the Security Council. Diplomatic observers are indulging in all kinds of conjectures as to Primakov's motives. It must be remembered that the erstwhile Soviet Union always supported India's policies on these issues and always believed that India would not produce weapons.

It is in this context that different conclusions are being drawn by diplomatic circles concerning the significance of the Russian foreign minister's visit to India. Russia is a very important friend and Mr. Primakov is known for his diplomatic acumen; nevertheless, the reality is that Russian President Yeltsin is seriously troubled by the reconstitution of the Soviet empire and the possibility of the return of the Communists regime in Russia.

India: Editorial on Effect of Clinton-Yeltsin Election Deal Leak

BK0404060896 Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English 2 Apr 96 p 10

[Editorial: "The Leak and After"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The surfacing of highly classified documents dealing with U.S. Russian relations — the leak has been confirmed by the White House spokesman — points to infighting at high levels in the U.S. bureaucracy on the Clinton-Yeltsin deal reached during the Sharm al-Shaykh summit. Presumably some do not approve of the deal and have, therefore, leaked the documents to the press. Though the two presidents have a pact to help out each other in their efforts to win re-election, the leak could well affect Mr Yeltsin's chances. No doubt the $10 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund has helped the Russian President to disburse arrears of salaries to workers and government employees accumulated over months. While this could attenuate their discontent to an extent, it is still

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uncertain whether that alone would win him the majority vote. On the other hand, it could lend credence to the Communist claim that Mr Yeltsin had reduced Russia to the status of a U.S. dependency. This impression may get strengthened if Russia were to make more concessions to the U.S. on the reinterpretation of the Anti Ballistic Missiles Treaty, enabling the latter to go ahead with theatre ballistic missile systems as a step towards abrogation of the treaty itself. Together with the recent assertion of the U.S. Secretary of States in Moscow about NATO's right to expand right up to the Russian border, the leaked documents are likely to whip up nationalist sentiment in Russia.

On the other hand, the U.S. assurance to Russia that it will not oppose closer integration of the Commonwealth of Independent States, (CIS) excluding the three Baltic states, will come in handy for Senator Bob Dole and the Republicans to denounce President Clinton as being too soft towards Russia and having let down the former Soviet republics, particularly the Ukraine. It would help the Communists and the nationalists charge Mr Yeltsin with wanting to break up the Soviet Union for his own personal benefit. Had the loan from the IMF been extended when the reformers were in power, it would have helped them significantly to expedite reforms. Instead, it is being done now mainly to ensure Mr Yeltsin's re-election. This is not likely to escape criticism in the forthcoming Russian elections from both the reformers and the Communists. It also speaks volumes for the nature of U.S. commitment to reforms in Russia. Given the extent of Russian dependency on the U.S. as revealed in these documents it will not be surprising if the Russian President toes the U.S. line totally in the forthcoming nuclear summit in Moscow. While the total impact of the leaked document on the Russian presidential elections is difficult to predict, those who did it had probably the U.S. elections in mind.

India: Russian Firms Discuss Supplying Equipment To Armed Forces

BK0404061296 Delhi THE HINDUSTAN TIMES in English 2 Apr 96 p 9

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] India's ageing armoury needs replacement despite its long-term indigenisation plans and leading international arms industries are eager to sell their latest gadgetry to the Indian Armed Forces.

India's immediate requirement reportedly include 155 mm howitzer guns, submarines, combat aircraft and advanced jet trainers, besides electronic warfare gadgetry. Competition is increasing among the arms manufacturers to supply these arms to India.

As majority of India's arms came from the erstwhile Soviet Union, the present Russian companies are keen on supplying arms, most importantly the spares.

Two trends are visible as far as demand for Russian equipment in India is concerned.

One is outright purchase of equipment and the second collaboration for up gradation, joint ventures and joint production, says Oleg Sidorenko, Deputy Director General of Rosvoorouzhenie, State Trading Corporation of Russia.

Rosvoorouzhenie looks after the business deals of more than 80 arms industries of Russia including Sukhoi, Mig-Mapo, Volkhov, Splav, Kamov and Rubin.

After the creation of Rosvooruzhenie, "we have a lot of attention to spares, tried to reestablish relations with the previous Soviet Republics, and somehow managed to gain control and bring it to the level before.

"And we assure that there won't be any problem in supplying spares in future," says Sidorenko.

Sidorenko and his team members were in India recently to display their weaponry in the second India international Civil and Defence Equipment and System Exhibition and Conference (IICDES '96) in the Capital.

Besides arms export, Rosvoorouzhenie is engaged in manufacturing abroad. It is also constructing air fields and firing ranges overseas on contract.

Training overseas specialists in the buyer country is also part of the organisation, says Sidorenko.

Russian exhibits included models of state-of-the-art Sukhoi combat aircraft, submarines, missile systems, 155 mm guns, combat helicopters and anti-aircraft systems Splav, a multiple launch rocket system, is the most sophisticated of its kind "We are rely to offer this to India," says a Rosvoorouzhenie official.

Splav Smerch is a 12-tube 300 mm multiple rocket system with a range of 70 kms and this system is reportedly under evaluation by the armed forces.

Apart from deadly Sukhhoi-30mm, multi-role combat aircraft Kamov helicopter was the other major attraction among the Russian display.

India: Foreign Ministry Warns U.S. Not To Sell Arms to Pakistan

BK0404065196 Delhi THE HINDUSTAN TIMES in English 3 Apr 96 p 10

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] India has once again cautioned the United States against equiping Pakistan with con-

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ventional arms in view of its weapons-oriented nuclear programme, additional evidence of which has recently surfaced.

In response to a question, a spokesman of the Ministry of External Affairs today said that New Delhi has seen the latest reports in the U.S. press about acquisition by Pakistan of blue prints from foreign sources (read China) for the manufacture of a nuclear bomb. "These reports," he said, "provide yet another confirmation of the relentlessness and duplicity with which Pakistan has pursued its clandestine nuclear weapons programme..."

The spokesman remarked that there was, by now, too much evidence to permit any objective observer to take an equivocal stand on the nature of the Pakistani nuclear programme. As maintained consistently by India, it was, in conception, a programme designed to equip Islamabad with nuclear weapons (and) "it continues to be so today."

Without specifically naming the U.S., which as brought the controversial Brown Amendment to resume military supplies to Pakistan, the spokesman said: "We hope that the countries which propose (to equip Islamabad with weapon systems) will take heed of the warnings which are emanating from recent reports regarding Pakistan's acquisition of materials for its nuclear weapons programme."

India: Pakistan Arranges Massive Training for Kashmiri Youth

BK0304145496 Delhi THE HINDUSTAN TIMES in English 1 Apr 96 p 20

[Report by Soumya K. Ghosh]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A preparatory report submitted to the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) reflecting the state of preparedness of Pakistan's relentless efforts to continue a "jihad" through low intensity conflict (LIC) in Kashmir states that a few militant training camps have been shifted to the Pakistan-Afghan border and some into Afghanistan.

The government has taken a serious view of the report, particularly on the eve of the Lok Sabha elections in the Valley. It says that the Pakistani agencies arranged for training on a massive scale to Kashmiri youths at specially set up training camps along with a string of transit camps. Details of camps of "tanzeems" (organisations) and camp leaders, available with the Indian security agencies, indicate that the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) means business.

The ISI has also arranged for office facilities free of cost, including buildings, telephones for most militant outfits operating in the Valley, to have better control of the situation. Developments since 1987 suggest changing patterns of training programmes for Kashmiri secessionists in Pakistan. Initially, elementary training for 7-10 days duration included introduction of Kalashnikov rifles, small arms rocket launchers, LMG's [light machine gun], explosives and guerrilla tactics with minimum practical exposure.

Gradually the training pattern has been refined to cover specialised training from 2 to 12 weeks duration incorporating handling of heavier weapons, including anti-aircraft guns, remote controlled devices anti-personnel tanks, mines and explosives, including Improvised Explosive Device (IED). Finer aspects of commando tactics and wireless telephony training is imparted to selected Kashmiri Muslim Subversives.

The report indicated that preference is being given to educated youth with technical or science background and affiliated with pro- Pakistan militant outfits for specialised and prolonged training. Pakistan agencies are now emphasising on minimum mandatory training period of three months for all militants to make them more proficient before their induction into the Valley.

A large number of small splinter militant groups are now getting inducted into training programmes. Such groups include Al-Inquilab, Pasdaran-e-Islam, Al Badar, Al Umar, Hizb-e-Allah, United Jehad Council of POK [Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir], Tehrik-ul-Mujahideen, Islamic Jung and Al Jehad forces.

Inputs provided by Military Intelligence (MI) indicate developments since 1987 and suggest that training schedule hitherto controlled by Pakistan authorities through several militant outfits are now being handled directly by Pakistan Army and the ISI. The direct control of arms training for Kashmiri secessionists by Pakistani Army and the ISI was primarily to insulate the Kashmiri exfiltrants against the militant outfits not considered pro-Pakistan as also to control the armed militancy.

Multiple training programmes imparting basic arms training with longer duration specialised schedules were being organised for selected youths at centres in Pakistan and erstwhile rebel-held Afghanistan by Pakistan Army personnel. Over 100 temporary training camps have been located, of which around five were in Afghanistan and rest in Pakistan and the POK. Simultaneously, there is more active connivance of Pakistan Army and the ISI through coordination of transborder movement of the Kashmiri secessionists — organising movement with Pakistan and POK, issuing of upgraded models of Kalashnikov and heavier weapons in proportionately larger quantity than earlier besides supply of small arms.

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The report also stated that Pakistan security officials and their operatives have infiltrated into the Valley to monitor and guide the armed militants, particularly those who belong to JEI [Jamaat-e-Islami] and HUM [Harkat-ul-Mujahideen] groups. A number of Kashmiri militants lost their lives while participating in the Afghan war along with Mujahideen of Hizb-e-Islam (Gulbuddin Hekmatayar faction) and Harkat-ul-Mujahideen. Recently, armed Muslim mercenaries from different countries like Afghanistan, Sudan, Bahrain have infiltrated in to the POK areas.

India: Article on Pakistan's Efforts To 'Frustrate' Kashmir Issue

BK0404061196 Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 1 Apr 96 p 10

[Article by Maloy Krishna Dhar: "Dogs of Peace"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Peace, like war, is a costly game. India should know this, courtesy of its three armed conflicts with Pakistan. India is still paying the price in the form of anti- terrorist and anti-insurgency warfare, engineered both from within and outside. Planned social disorder for narrow political gains has often played havoc with the elasticity of India's socio-political fabric. The Babri Masjid episode for example, has left deeper scars than the three wars with Pakistan.

India has suffered equally from peace initiatives. During war, a country is alert, preventing infiltration and other anti-national activities. But peace brings with it a relaxation of guard, as a result of which hostile forces find it easy to sabotage it. Recent examples are the untimely and unexpected deaths of Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, R. Premadasa and Yitzhaq Rabin, who were all trying to resolve the conflicts in their own countries. The message is clear: Some parties do not want peace, or at least not the kind these leaders were pursuing. The goings on in Sri Lanka and Israel tell of the capability of terror machines which strike at will. Peace, achieved militarily or diplomatically, sows afresh new dissent, which goes to show one man's peace is ignominious for another.

It causes concern when India's home minister, S.B. Chavan, openly points an accusing finger at Pakistan for its alleged efforts to stymie the electoral process in Kashmir. His pronouncements are unnerving in that as home minister he is supposed to be informed enough to not resort to verbal hype. No matter how much progress has been made in the peace initiative in Kashmir, his statements can only provoke Pakistan further into undoing India's efforts. True, in the event of a war with Pakistan, India is adequately prepared. But the Kashmir imbroglio can only degenerate if an armed conflict occurs.

The well orchestrated peace talks between Chavan and the group of fringe militants of Kashmir have evoked sharp reactions in Pakistan. The coverage of the Urdu newspapers in Lahore, Muzaffarabad and Karachi throws sufficient light on the thought processes of political leaders, government agencies and scores of religious groups supportive of the separatist movement in Kashmir. It is clear some parties hitherto supporting the cause of Islamic liberation have been bought off by Indian money, which has only made the genuine crusaders more determined in rejecting peace in Kashmir. Benazir Bhutto has been consistently criticised for having allowed India to continue with its apparent genocide against defence less Muslims in Kashmir. New Delhi's decision to include Kashmir in the forthcoming parliamentary elections has, as expected, been dismissed by Pakistan as yet another fraudulent attempt to normalise the situation in the strife torn state.

Efforts to restore peace across a negotiating table with a group of former hardcore militants have sent confusing signals to the valley. Those among the Kashmiris intent on peace are not sure how the direct involvement of a group of militants could effect the desired solution. In fact, the peaceful loving segment in the state is expecting more military and paramilitary deployment and more violence from the valley based mercenary outfits. Srinagar, Baramulla and Anantnag are agog with rumours about impending terrorist strikes. Though the All Parties Hurriyat Conference is yet to formulate a strategy of defiance, some leading terrorist outfits — the Jamaal ul Mujahideen, the People's League, the Hizbul Mujahideen, for example — have ritually called for a strike in protest against the sham peace process and the announcement of elections.

Pakistan watchers and strategic analysts feel the angry outpourings in the Pakistani media are not instances of media hysteria. It is just that the Pakistani establishment and Bhutto in particular cannot afford to let India march away with a successful peace initiative and win international accolade in the process. Punjab could be a different ball game of proxy war. But Kashmir is not only a part of the "unfinished agenda of Partition", it is also the locale of the sacred war of the Ummah. The failure of Pakistan to prevent India from getting an upper hand in the Kashmir problem is sure to reduce the appeal of the two nation ideology. Bereft of this ideology, Pakistan could just be a nation state without the capacity of nationhood.

Therefore, not religion, but a blind hatred and unrelenting desire to hurt India continues to provide the Pak-

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istani establishment with flimsy issues with which to pontificate. Any feeling that the Bhutto government or the army has reneged on the commitment to violence in Kashmir would lead to upheavals in Pakistan. Hence Pakistani strategists are burning the midnight oil overtime to assail India with newer problems vis a vis Kashmir.

It is essential India be prepared to face the anticipated perils of the peace process. Intelligence agencies expect a fresh escalation of violence in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in the valley and Hindu dominated Doda in the near future. Also, over the last four months, it is believed, Pakistan has succeeded in slipping through large quantities of explosives and small weapons into India. The carriers are believed to be Sikh terrorists belonging to the Khalistan Liberation Force (Sekhon), the International Babbar Khalsa and the Khalistan Commando Force (Zaffarwal).

The Kashmiri and Sikh militants, along with their counterparts in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, are known to have their respective hit lists. General guesses that a particular VIP is going to be a victim of a terrorist attack hold little water unless such speculations are backed by sufficient strategic and tactical intelligence. It is hoped that after the assassination of Beant Singh, the concerned agencies and both the state and Central governments have toned up security measures to avert similar tragedies.

Pakistan, in its attempt to frustrate an Indian breakthrough in Kashmir is likely to strum the communal chord. In India, communal forces seem to be dormant for the moment. Talk of Hindutva too has died down. Therefore, the stage is ready made for a possible communal explosion if certain leaders identified with Hindu aspirations are targetted for assassination. Bizarre as it sounds this is a plausible theory especially with elections round the corner and with politicians hitting the road with their campaigns.

India: 3 Militants Killed in Kashmir; Arms Recovered

BK0304131796 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1230 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Jammu and Kashmir, a self-styled deputy divisional commander of a militant outfit and his two associates were killed in a fierce encounter with security forces in Anantnag District. PTI quoting official sources reports that the security forces surrounded a village on specific information and in the encounter the three militants were killed and a large quantity of arms and ammunition recovered.

India: Inquiry Ordered on Killing of Kashmir Activist Andrabi

BK0304155096 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The National Human Rights Commission has ordered an inquiry into the killing of human rights activist Jalil Ahmed Andrabi in the Kashmir valley. The decision taken in New Delhi today follows the concern expressed by human right activists in India and abroad on the killing.

Mr. Andrabi was reportedly abducted by some unidentified gunmen outside his residence on the 8th of last month. After about three weeks his body was found in Srinagar.

India: 5 Soldiers Killed in Ambush by Tripura 'Extremists'

BK0404060996 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Tripura, five CRPF jawans [Central Reserve Police Force soldiers] and one civilian driver were killed in an ambush by suspected extremists near Agartala last night. One CRPF jawan was also injured in the ambush. Suspected extremists ambushed a CRPF jeep when it was taking the jawans to their duty posts. The search is on to nab the culprits.

India: Spokesman Terms OIC Statement Pakistan's 'Handiwork'

BK0404061496 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] India yesterday described as a handiwork of Pakistan a statement issued by the OIC [Organization of Islamic Conference] Contact Group in New York making false allegations about recent incidents in Kashmir. The External Affairs Ministry spokesman said in a statement in New Delhi that the process of restoring normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir will not be helped if the OIC group permits itself to be used by Islamabad to issue inaccurate and provocative statements against India. Refuting the Contact Group's statement, the spokesman said that in the recent incidents at the Hazratbal shrine, the terrorists sought to desecrate the holy place and the action of the state police was in response to this threat to the shrine. The spokesman also reiterated that no effort will be spared to apprehend those guilty in the kidnapping and tragic murder of Jalil Andrabi.

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India: 5 Members of Abdhra Pradesh 'Extremist' Group Killed

BK0404083796 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Andhra Pradesh, five extremists were killed in two separate encounters with the police in Nadirabad district yesterday. A court building was also blasted in the encounter. According to information reaching Hyderabad, amongst those killed were four activists of Singhavali Karmika Samakhaya, a frontal outfit of the People's War Group. Another extremist was killed at Khanapur in the same district in an exchange of fire with the police.

India: BJP President Wants Nuclear Weapons To Meet Security Needs

BK0304124096 Varanasi AJ in Hindi 23 Mar 96 p 1

[Report by VARTA]

[FBIS Translated Text] Ajmer 22 March — Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] President Lal Krishna Advani stressed the need for producing nuclear weapons in view of the country's security needs.

Talking to newsmen at the commercial hub of Rajasthan during his Journey for Self-Rule to Superior Rule, Advani said that since China and Pakistan have gone nuclear, national security imperatives compel us to make nuclear weapons. He added that India is quite advanced in the nuclear energy and technology field and that is why our foreign and economic policies should be such that the country fully benefits from this capability.

Advani said that the BJP has decided to make national security an important issue in the forthcoming parliamentary elections. Answering a question, he disclosed that his party has given thought to dividing some bigger states into smaller states. These states include Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. He said the forthcoming meeting of the party's central election committee on 24-25 March will consider names for party nominations for the parliamentary election and the initial list of candidates will be released by 27 March.

Later, addressing a public meeting at Nasirabad during his journey, Advani appealed for people's cooperation in forming a BJP government at the center for the sake of national security and social harmony and to eliminate corruption.

Criticizing Congress-I, he said Congress-I members surely made many sacrifices before independence, but its decline began after assuming power. That is why India is lagging behind many countries even after 50 years of independence. The BJP president reiterated his party's determination to rebuild the Ram temple in Ayodhya after coming to power. He said that the BJP's desire to rebuild the Ram temple at Ayodhya is not against Muslim interests.

India: ISRO Chief Expects Satellite Vehicle To Remain in Demand

BK0304144096 Delhi BUSINESS STANDARD in English 1 Apr 96 p 5

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman K. Kasturirangan yesterday expressed confidence that the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), the country's third generation launcher, would be in demand for low earth and intermediate orbit launches from global satellite manufacturers.

In an interview, Kasturirangan said during the next few months ISRO would approach satellite manufacturers who are the potential customers to use the PSLV. He said there were not many vehicles of the PSLV class to launch lower earth or intermediate orbit satellites for which there was mass potential. We have a vehicle which is of intermediate class for placing one tonne satellites into polar orbits or that weighing a couple of tonnes in lower earth orbits, he pointed out.

The success of PSLV-D3 would definitely be noticed by interested parties. Kasturirangan said he pointed out that only a few launch vehicles match the PSLV class in the world today. They include the Delta series of the U.S. and the Long March 2c of China besides a Russian launch vehicle. The initial studies on the flight of the PSLV which was successfully launched from Sriharikota on March 21 had showed that we have achieved the desired objective and enough guarantee was obtained to safely go ahead with the planning of IRS (Indian remote sensing satellites) launches with our own vehicles, he said.

An important fallout of the launch was the validation for the first time, of the wind based trajectory to reduce effective load on the vehicle during the ascent of the vehicle through the atmosphere. The trajectory would primarily take care of structure of the vehicle in the atmosphere and limit the control force demand. This could now be used for future PSLV programmes and also for the next generation Geo-Stationary Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) missions.

Kasturirangan said one of the important realisations of this mission was that the satellite injection accuracy was very high with the amount of fuel consumed being very low. In earlier PSLV launches in terms of velocity correction of the spacecraft the amount of fuel expended

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was 25 metre per second compared to 10-12 metre per second achieved by IRS-P3.

Referring to the GSLV programme he said the ISRO was in the defining stage of the first GSLV spacecraft to be launched by early 1998. It would have a payload of one tonne and the details were being worked out, he added.

He said the last PSLV-D3 flight had validated the reliability of several systems that will go into the GSLV programme including the 128 tonne first stage using a solid booster.

In all the three PSLV flights the first stage booster had behaved as per our expectations Kasturirangan said.

He also said that later this year ISRO would test the liquid stage strip on boosters for the GSLV programme. As per the contract with the Russians the first stage cryogenic engines were expected to be delivered to ISRO by this year.

On the performance of the IRS-P3 Kasturirangan said two of the four major payloads including the modular opto electronic scanner (MOS) of the German space agency primarily being used for oceanic studies had been validated. The scanner had been even switched over a German ground station he added.

India: ISRO Completes Design of 7.5-Ton Cryogenic Engine

BK0404101096 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Indian Space Research Organization, ISRO, has completed the design of the 7.5-ton cryogenic engine for the flight of the geostationary launch vehicle. The director of the lead center engaged in the development of the indigenous engine, Dr. K. Madhavan Nair, said in an interview that it will help launch vehicles to put 2500-kg satellites into orbit.

India: Article Urges Reviewing Foreign Policy

BK0404092096 Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 2 Apr 96 p 12

[Article by Achin Vanaik: "Policy Wants a Cracker"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Without the realisation that nonalignment can no longer serve as an adequate compass in the post-Cold War era, Indian foreign policy is in a mess. Its diplomacy is essentially reactive. Witness the shenanigans over the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty [CTBT] — to test the bomb or not, to exercise the nuclear option or to remain ambiguous, to continue negotiations or withdraw, to scupper the CTBT completely or to withdraw at the last moment.

India's stance on other issues is similar, be it India-United States ties, the Kashmir imbroglio and relations with Pakistan, the unresolved border question with China or tensions with its south Asian neighbours.

Circumstances have changed, especially with the end of the Cold War. But this is not the real problem. The real problem is the persistence of old ways of thinking about Indian foreign policy. Such ideas were incapable of dealing even with the Cold War era. It is time to rethink India's strategic assumptions, starting with those on "national security". This very notion is highly problematic and in most cases meaningless.

Even if national security is assumed to be relevant, the concept in the last decade of the 20th century cannot remain what it after World War II or in the 19th century. The concept now is broader and user than before Defence experts and diplomats now a days say achieving economic prosperity at home has become more important, that the economically powerful countries will become more influential without having to be militarily powerful.

This is an imprecise and somewhat confused way of acknowledging the notion of security — desirable security goals and means — itself has changed.

The specific military dimension of national security has become relativised. It is still important but much less so either as goal or means. The United Kingdom and France may still have strong militaries. However, both their status and reality as major powers have greatly diminished. The U.S. may still be the single greatest power but with its society and economy in a mess, the idea it enjoys a strong national security position sounds hollow.

With the changing concept of national security in India, it is important to calibrate the relationship between the specifically military — and nuclear — dimension and the pursuit of larger goals of security. This requires greater modesty about and recognition of the limitations of military power in today's world. It should also be realised state craft and diplomacy, even of the big powers, is less, able to shape the world in desired ways and address "national security interests" than before. With the approach of the 21st century, this trend will become stronger, not weaker.

The accumulation of national power, conventionally understood as military might plus economic strength, remains important. But it can no longer ensure national security. It now includes a host of national and global— the two can no longer be easily separated— needs in economic, social political and ecological spheres. This is the dilemma of the time. As the world and India's

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national interests become more complex, the capacity of "national power" to secure "national interests" declines.

The international system should not be seen as made up primarily of states interacting with each other. It is much more, with many more actors and connections. Therefore, the capacities of individual states, even the most powerful ones, to shape the world decreases.

History provides the simplest way to grasp this point. The first example of a hegemonic state power over an international system was Pax Britannica. The Pax Americana that emerged after 1945 was in both absolute and relative terms a far greater economic and military power than imperial Britain. But the former could never come close to approximating the weight of Pax Britannica in the global system of its time. In turn, the Pax Americana of today, though it "won" the Cold War, cannot rival the relative weight of the earlier Pax Americana.

This is not only because of the rise of Pax Germanica and Pax Japonica. The latter, incidentally, will never equal the relative standing of the more feeble Pax Americana of today even though it might reach hitherto undreamt of levels of economic productivity.

As for a future Pax Chinesiska, that is Henry Kissinger's pipedream. He remains caught in the old mind set of strategic thinking which grossly exaggerates the importance of nation states and national power — itself understood in crude terms — in shaping the world order.

What then about a Pax Indica? Again, a historical approach can give some lessons. At the time of independence, it was confidently perceived that China and India were destined by their size and potential to dominate Asia — along with the Soviet Union. By the late Seventies, most strategic experts would have settled for India dominating south Asia. After the end of the Cold War not only does even this seem more difficult, it also seems rather pointless. What's happening?

What is happening, in one sense, is simple enough. For a whole host of reasons the basic national security concerns of countries are coming to resolve around three issues of vital importance to ordinary citizens. The overall trend is towards a greater non elite influence on the very definition of what constitutes national interests. This is reinforced by the pressures arising in an increasingly complex and uncontrollable world order.

These three issues are economic wellbeing — for everybody, social cohesion and political liberty. Conventional foreign policy will have to increasingly think about how it is to contribute to achieving these goals. This means a fundamental shift away from the kind of thinking that still unfortunately dominates in the "national establishment".

What does this mean for India? It means liberating strategic thinly here from two obsessions in particular India should give up the unattainable and increasingly less meaningful ambition to try and become a "major global actor" in the future. India should give up the idea China is and will be some kind of strategic rival or opponent for whose challenge it must constantly prepare.

If Chinese leaders are silly enough to think in terms of the feasibility of a Pax Chinesiska in the future, that is their delusion. They already have huge problems concerning unevenness of economic prosperity and absence democratic freedoms that literally threaten to explode in the next decades.

Indian strategic thinking should more modestly focus on south Asian not to dominate it, but to search for ways to resolve its central politico-strategic problem — hostile India-Pakistan reactions. Abandoning other ambitions would contribute decisively to transforming India-Pakistan relations.

The Sino-Indian border dispute should be resolved as quickly as possible in the way it will eventually have to be — give and take along the line of actual control. The nuclear equation between India and China is utterly unimportant, as are the nuclear equations between India-U.S. and India Russia, both now and in the future.

This then opens the way for rethinking the India-Pakistan nuclear equation on the Indian side, especially in ways which could dramatically improve bilateral relations and sideline hawks in both countries. Successful elimination of nuclear hostility between the two would also have profound effect on a whole gamut of issues including Kashmir.

The only hope of achieving the three desired goals of prosperity, cohesion and liberty lies in recognising the countries of south Asia have common problems which require common solutions. The solutions will have to address common pressures from the more advanced countries determined to organise matters regionally and globally to preserve what they have. A common security must be pursued.

To those who might argue abandoning India's preoccupation with the Chinese challenge or its pursuit of great power status is idealistic and unrealistic, one can only say, wait and see.

The next 20 years will almost certainly confirm the so called Chinese challenge was a great myth. The search for great power status was a pointless chimera. If one

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does not anticipate this much more probable reality and prepare sensibly for real problems, an irretrievable opportunity will be wasted.

India: Article Examines Significance of Muslim Voters in Elections

BK0404084896 Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 2 Apr 96 p 12

[Article by Rajeev Ranjan Roy: "Green-Eyed Voters"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Muslims, constituting 14 percent of the Indian electorate, can tilt the scales in at least 180 Lok Sabha seats in the coming general elections. They will play a particularly pivotal role in the first national polls following the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

Till the 1989 elections Muslims were by and large with the Congress. It can, however, be said that after the demise of Indira Gandhi they were on the lookout for a new custodian of their interests at the national level. This was reflected in Muslims voting for the Janata Dal and other National Front parties in the 1989 and 1991 elections.

But the Babri Masjid demolition in December 1992 served as a major blow to the foundation of the Congress Muslim tieup. The community squarely blamed the P.V. Narasimha Rao government for abetting the demolition perpetrated by the protagonists of Hindutva. The subsequent assembly elections in a few states, particularly Uttar Pradesh [UP], ended the myth of the Muslims as being diehard Congress supporters.

Muslims in Bihar — which sends 54 members of parliament — also jettisoned the Congress. By arresting L.K. Advani who was conducting a yatra [journey] through Bihar, the chief minister, Laloo Prasad Yadav, secured a niche in the hearts of Muslims. In addition, there was his excellent record in preventing communal violence. This helped him register victory in the 1995 assembly polls. On its part, the Congress not only lost the Muslim votes in the state but also marginalised itself in Bihar politics.

Both UP and Bihar, accounting for 139 seats collectively, are no longer Congress bastions. This is a major concern of party bigwigs at the national level. They apprehend a staggering electoral loss in the two crucial states. To a large extent this is because of the loss of the minority vote. Hence the Congress's apologies, though belated, for the destruction of the Babri Masjid. However this has had no effect. The Muslims remain reluctant to vote for the Congress.

But they are in a dilemma vis-a-vis the secular forces at the national level. If in UP their choice is the Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party and the All India Indira Congress (Tiwari) in order of priority, in Bihar they are completely with the Janata Dal. The Muslims' choice varies with each state — Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and West Bengal.

The presence of Muslims voters of different hues has made the situation very complex. A division of their votes may adversely affect the prospects of secular parties at the hustings. Political analysts contend the division of Muslim votes even at the micro level will upset the secular parties' applecart. The community needs to be cautious in its exercise of franchise to minimise chances of a communal party capturing power at the Centre.

At present, Muslims have two options at the national level. One, the Congress led by Rao, and the other, the National Front-Left Front combine. Both sides have their disadvantages. The Congress may bifurcate and Rao, whom the Muslims have detested since the demolition, may continue as party president. The National Front- Left Front combine has not been able to strengthen its base in other parts of the country. In states crucial for its electoral fortunes, the front combine is dependent on regional "chieftains".

If political observers are to be believed, Muslims will opt for the Congress in states where the front combine does not stand a chance and vice versa. According to a Muslim leader this will prevent the large scale division of votes. But it may not serve the purpose of forming a strong secular government at the Centre, fears another Muslim leader from Bihar. The division of Muslim votes in any way will reduce the chances of secular forces capturing New Delhi. Hence he suggests complete support to the front combine which most Muslims prefer to the Congress.

Muslim indecisiveness, leading to vote splitting, will affect UP and Bihar the worst. A political commentator feels if the front leaders succeed in preventing Muslim votes from dividing among the smaller parties, they can win more than 100 seats from the region. Otherwise-the front will cut a sorry figure since the other vote bank — the combination of backward classes and Dalits — will be shared by all the secular forces.

In UP, with 85 seats at stake, Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party commands the major part of Muslim support. But parties like Congress(T) and Kanshi Ram's BSP also claim some of their support. Even the deviation of a small percentage of Muslim votes against the Samajwadi Party will affect the prospects of its nominees. This is because the division of backward classes and Dalits on caste considerations is almost sure to happen in UP. Hence, Muslims are to play the kingmaker.

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Similarly in Bihar, they are still with the Janata Dal. This is Why the front combine has pinned much hope on Laloo Prasad Yadav despite his being caught in the quagmire of the animal husbandry scandal.

Thus there is little doubt regarding the crucial importance of Muslim votes in the impending elections. If they want to keep the Bharatiya Janata Party away from the corridors of power they will have to exercise more precaution in casting their votes. At least in UP and Bihar the Muslims should not make the mistake of splitting their votes among several groups. This will serve only a limited purpose and upset the two fronts' prospects.

India: Editorial on 'Setback' in Uttar Pradesh's Janata Dal Party

BK0404065596 Madras THE HINDU in English 3 Apr 96 p 10

[Editorial: "Testing Time"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Even if there is no crisis as such in the Janata Dal following the revolt of the State unit in Uttar Pradesh, there is little doubt that the a cohesiveness of the party has received a setback. The Janata Dal's alliance and understanding with the Samajwadi Party of Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav as a result of which the Dal had agreed to contest only 16 seats in the State naturally was resented by the State unit as it had all the characteristics of a sellout which was not becoming of a party that was hoping to present a national alternative to the Congress(I) at the Centre. In a retaliatory move, the Janata Dal has dissolved the State unit but this is expected to have no political consequences of significance. The Janata Dal would seem to flip-flop its way from one crisis to another and the greatest irony of all is how one politician cynically tries to upstage another even on the same issue. And in this dismal scenario it is Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav who has emerged as the strongest leader and now as the chief of the Janata Dal he has been assuring his supporters that the party is going to win a majority of the seats it is contesting.

Through a mixture of guts and boldness as well as clever manipulation in winning over wavering colleagues, Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav has emerged as a force to reckon with in Indian politics. His full five-year term as Chief Minister of one of the most difficult States in the country is proof enough of his dexterous handling of affairs. Along with Mr. Deve Gowda, Mr. Hegde and Mr. Biju Patnaik, he is one of the few who can provide the Janata Dal with a base of support. And yet the most important question is whether the Janata Dal he is leading, splintered and battered, is going to make a mark in the coming elections although in Bihar the story is different for it is Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav all the way. In the current Lok Sabha, the truncated Janata Dal has only 23 members while the group that parted company with the Dal — the Samata Party — has a membership of 13. Not an impressive figure by any standards but Mr. Laloo Prasad believes that he could spring a surprise in Bihar itself where he is setting up candidates for 44 seats.

There was a time when the expectations of the Congress(I) being rejected at the Centre in the general elections brought the Opposition leaders closer together to the extent that it seemed unlikely that there would be a parting of ways before the electorate has had its say. The Janata Dal which is the main constituent of the National Front thus acquired tremendous importance but today it is like any other party riven by factions and, therefore, it is extremely dim cult for it to impress in the national context. A one-point programme to end the Congress(I) rule at the Centre is just not enough to win the confidence of the people. Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav has, however, tried to democratise the party as, for instance, when he permitted the Karnataka unit to decide on ticket distribution to contest all the 28 seats for the Lok Sabha. This is a refreshing change from the practice of centralised diktats that usually run into problems at the local level. Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav perhaps wants to loosen the grip of the high command and allow the States to shape the details of a broad commitment. What is disconcerting for the party is the serious view taken by the Janata Dal's Left allies of the revolt in the Uttar Pradesh unit although they are being assured that there was no need to take an alarmist view of the development. The real question is whether the tensions that have overtaken the Janata Dal could be offset by the presence of influential regional leaders. What is of direct interest at the moment is the Janata Dal's capacity to posit some vision of the Opposition alternative. A testing time indeed for Mr. Laloo Yadav and his partymen.

India: Survey Says Congress Party To Lose 10 Seats in Elections

BK0404074296 Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English 3 Apr 96 p 1

[Report by K. Balakrishnan]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Congress tally from the southern states is likely to fall to 55 to 65 seats, according to early surveys conducted by the Centre for Media Studies (CMS), a leading opinion poll organisation.

The Congress party had won a solid block of 103 out of the 129 Lok Sabha seats in the four southern states in 1991.

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In Tamil Nadu [TN], the Congress AIADMK [All India Anna Dravida Mummetra Kazhagam] alliance had made a clean sweep of the 39 seats in 1991.

However, it now faces a formidable challenge from the DMK [Dravida Mummetra Kazhagam] Moopanar-Rajnikant axis. The Tamil Nadu survey conducted by CMS in January-February 1996 had estimated 25-30 Lok Sabha seats for the Congress-ADMK [Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] alliance; but a reworking of the numbers on the assumption that the Congress is likely to lose at least half its vote (due to the Moopanar defection and the entry of Rajnikant on the side of the DMK and the Congress dissidents) has brought down the tally to 10-15 seats.

The party is expected to do well in Andhra Pradesh, but may suffer major reverses in the other three states which gave a massive mandate to the party following Rajiv Gandhi's assassination in 1991.

The split in the Telugu Desam party is likely to work to the advantage of Congress, and boost its tally in Andhra Pradesh [AP] to 33-35 seats, up from the 25 it had won in 1991. This position may change if Lakshmi Parvati's campaign picks up momentum.

In Karnataka, the ruling Janata Dal rated high in popularity in the CMS survey held in February and is estimated to win 14 to 16 of the state's 28 Lok Sabha seats. The BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] is expected to win 6 to 8 seats while the Congress is likely to perform poorly winning only 4 to 5 seats.

In Kerala, the Congress is likely to garner a higher vote share for the Lok Sabha seats than for the assembly and can hope to win 8 to 10 seats.

Underlying the voters' mood is a desire for change. Asked whether they wanted the present central government reelected or preferred change, it was only in AP that a majority of voters wanted stability. In Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala, the respondents preferred change.

The series of state-level surveys were conducted by CMS during January-March. Later this month, CMS will carry out a nationwide opinion poll for The Times of India and publish an election forecast.

	Total Seats	1991 Seats Won	1996 Projected Seats
Andhra Pradesh	42	25	33-35
Tamil Nadu	39	39#	10-15#
Karnataka	28	23	4-5
Kerala	20	16*	8-10*
Total	129	103	55-65 # includes ADMK * includes UDF allies

	AP	TN	KARANATAKA	KERALA
Stability	65	3	23	37 at Centre
Change of Government	21	53	70	47
Doesn't matter	6	2	2	9
Can't say	8	6	5	7

India: Editorial Views Electoral Alliance in Tamil Nadu

BK0404054096 Delhi THE ASIAN AGE in English 2 Apr 96 p 8

[Editorial: "The Fire in Tamil Nadu"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The loyal chief of the Tamil Nadu Congress, Mr Kumari Anantan, has described the alliance between the less respectful Mr G.K. Moopanar and the DMK [Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] as a "marriage of convenience." The cliche is a trifle disarming. Why should the two new partners enter into a marriage of inconvenience if convenience is what is worrying Mr Anantan so much? Or should we believe that the Tamil Nadu Congress has had a sudden attack of ideological or any other scruple? Apart from the fact that this would be a major departure from normal practice, the Congress would be extremely hard-pressed to show any ideological motivation for its alliance with the chief minister Ms Jayalalitha. Leave aside ideology, relations between these much-married partners has not even been polite during the last five years, and if Mr Moopanar is an extremely angry man today it is because he has suffered at the hands of a spouse like Ms Jayalalitha. Indeed, the person who can provide the best evidence of this is Mr

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M. Chenna Reddy, from the residence of the governor of the state. In these five years, the incandescent chief minister has not only antagonised her partner party but also done enough to create bitter pools of discontent against her style of functioning. Add to this the tremendous anger at the rampant corruption that has gone on, and you have the recipe for an upsurge against her rule. It was this anger that she has been trying to negate through her alliance with the Congress. She knows that she has absolutely no chance of winning anything by herself, and even a three-way contest would have benefited the DMK. It is surprising that Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao did not accept the alternative of an alliance with the DMK, which he could have wrapped up on his terms. This would not only have ensured victory, but given him a potentially decisive asset in the Lok Sabha that will emerge from the coming elections. Lastly, the alliance with the DMK would have removed the latter from the National Front bloc, making it a double victory for the Congress. What compulsions persuaded Mr Rao to stick with Ms Jayalalitha when both common sense and advice were suggesting otherwise, we cannot say. But the consequences are all too evident. Even those who were suggesting that the Congress could end up as the largest single party in the Lok Sabha are beginning to wonder if they have been too wise before the event. With the popular star Rajnikant now determined to campaign for the Karunanidhi-Moopanar alliance, Ms Jayalalitha and her allies are clearly on the downward slide.

The person who has had his cake and eaten it too is Mr Karunanidhi: he has got an alliance with the local Congress leadership and the cadre without having had to formally bow before Delhi. He has not only improved his chances of victory but has kept all his options open too for the post-election scenario in Delhi, since he has retained as many as 19 Lok Sabha seats for himself. He would never have got so many in an alliance with a united Congress. From the comfortable position of an assured victory in a state with 39 seats, Mr Narasimha Rao has walked into a mess which could have far reaching consequences. If he cannot now win in Tamil Nadu, it is unlikely that he will be able to form the government in Delhi after the elections. That is the size of the problem that Mr Moopanar has created for him by his revolt.

India: Editorial Views Rao's Role in Tamil Nadu Situation

BK0404054296 Delhi THE PIONEER in English 2 Apr 96 p 10

[Editorial: "Bonfire of the Vanities"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] If Mr PV Narasimha Rao has recently acquired some egg and such other substance like chappals on his political visage as a result of his high-handed decision to consort electorally with the AIADMK [All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam], he has only himself to blame for the new make-up. The bonfires burning in Sathya-murti Bhavan, the official Congress abode in Tamil Nadu, comprising almost exclusively of larger-than-life cut-outs of Mr Narasimha Rao, is a logical culmination of pent up Congress frustrations in the southern State. To say that the Prime Minister did not have a coherent understanding of the ground reality obtaining in Tamil Nadu would be to state the obvious. It would also miss the point entirely. The truth is Mr Narasimha Rao never bothered to make even a half-hearted attempt to come to grips with the situation in Tamil Nadu. That State appears on the Congress radar screen only when the Lok Sabha polls veer indeterminately into view.

Then too, it is important only in as much as electoral arithmetic's are concerned. Well, this time if the figures promise not to add up to Mr Rao's satisfaction it is because Mr Narasimha Rao almost single-handedly introduced new variables, new factions and therefore new fractions into the equation. First, he divided the Congress by pitting Mr VK Ramamurthy against Mr GK Moopanar. Then he further sub-divided what was left between Mr Moopanar and Mr Kumari Anandan. All this he did "while giving the party rank and file to believe Ms Jayalalitha was the real enemy. It was a difficult thing to do, but Mr Narasimha Rao is, if anything, inimitable.

In the process, he has ended up confusing everybody, including, possibly, himself. If he appears unfazed, it is because it is sheer force of habit. That having been said, it can be put on record here that never before have the people of Tamil Nadu been given such a latitude, in terms of choice, at the polling booth. After all, this is what democracy is supposed to be all about. In Tamil Nadu, the principle that people get the rulers they deserve applies equally to poll partners: Ms Jayalalitha and Mr Narasimha Rao, who have jointly decided to stress commonalities and thereby given cynicism a higher political profile; Mr Moopanar and Mr Karunanidhi, who have both suffered exiled and have made a virtue of a necessity.

There is, however, the matter of tieing up the loose ends, which involve, at this moment, Mr Arunachalam, Mr Chidambaram — who may yet decide that discretion is the better part of valor; and Mr Mani Shankar Aiyer. These three gentlemen, publicly at least, have previously expressed a distaste for a political alliance with Ms Jayalalitha. As has now become obvious, the situation is rife with possibilities. The question of allotting a free symbol to Mr Moopanar will provide some moments

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of suspense. Mr Rajnikanth, who has, both by popular consensus and expectation, been assigned the role of the moderator, is expected to keep the audience engaged with another star turn.

India: Delhi Radio Updates Election-Related Developments

BK0304164896

[FBIS Report] Delhi All India Radio Network in English at 0245 GMT on 3 April carries a report on the filing of election nomination papers and related developments. The report gives names of prominent figures who filed nominations papers yesterday such as Prime Minister Narasimha Rao; Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] leader Atal Behari Vajpayee; N.D. Tiwari, president of All India Indira Congress-Tiwari; Janata Dal Secretary General Ram Vilas Paswan; M. Karunanidhi, chief of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam [DMK]; Indrajit Gupta, leader of the Communist Party of India; and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar.

In Tamil Nadu, the report says, the Congress faction led by G.K. Moopanar, which has now been recognized by the Election Commission as a separate party known as Tamil Manila Congress, has announced a 16 candidates standing for the Lok Sabha and 29 for the state assembly. The Janata Dal and Marumalarchi DMK have reached an electoral understanding.

In Andhra Pradesh, the ruling Telugu Desam Party has fielded B. Nagi Reddy in Nandyal Lok Sabha constituency, where Prime Minister Narasimha Rao himself is running for election.

The report adds the "former Union minister, Mr. Vidya Charan Shukla, has announced that he will not contest in the coming election. Mr. Shukla said he will abide by the Congress-I high command's directive. The party had decided against fielding those facing charges in the hawala [illegal money transfer] case. Mr. Shukla said he will campaign for the party."

Delhi All India Radio Network in English at 0830 GMT carries another report indicating the filing of nominations by West Bengal chief minister, Mr. Jyoti Basu; former chief minister, Mr. Siddhartha Shankar Ray; Tamil Nadu chief minister, Ms. Jayalalitha for state assembly constituencies. The report also notes the filing of nomination papers by K.V. Thangabalu, union minister of state for welfare, and P.R. Kumaramangalam, general secretary of All India Indira Congress-Tiwari for Lok Sabha seats. The report notes the Kerala chief minister, A.K. Antony filing nomination papers. It also mentions Mallikarjun, union minister of state defense, and former union minister P. Upendra doing the same. The report adds: "In Jammu and Kashmir, 45 candidates have filed their nominations. Eighteen nominations were submitted in the Kashmir valley for three constituencies, while in Jammu division, 25 candidates filed their papers for two constituencies. Two candidates have filed their papers for the Ladakh constituency. Various political parties in the state are to begin election broadcasts soon from the Jammu and Kashmir stations of Doordarshan and All India Radio. The schedule of the poll broadcast will be chalked out at a meeting of the representatives of all recognized political parties today." The report also specifies the filing of nomination paper by former union minister, Madhavrao Scindia, as an independent candidate from Gwalior parliamentary constituency.

Delhi All India Radio Network in English at 1530 GMT carries a report saying: "The filing of nominations to 543 Lok Sabha constituencies, and five state and one union territory assemblies closed this evening. Early reports from various states indicate that over 5,000 candidates have filed their nominations for the Lok Sabha". The report also points out the filing of nominations by popular figures such as George Fernandez, Mulayam Singh Yadav, and N.D. Tiwari, Ajit Singh, Salman Khurshid, and P.A. Sangma.

The report adds: "Today also political parties released list of more contestants for the polls. The Janata Dal has released its list of candidates for Maharashtra and Gujarat. The party leader, Mr. Sharad Yadav, told newspersons in New Delhi today that the party will contest 20 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra and 18 in Gujarat." The report also says that the All India Indira Congress-Tiwari is contesting for over 300 Lok Sabha seats and has fielded its candidates for the assembly elections in six states.

The report adds: "The election commission and the center today held a meeting to sort out the problem arising out of staggering of poll dates in Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting was attended by the three election commissioners, cabinet secretary, and the union home secretary. Talking to newspersons after the two and a half hour meeting, the chief election commissioner, Mr. T.N. Seshan, said all matters relating to Jammu and Kashmir parliamentary elections were discussed between the commission and the government. The election commissioner, Dr. M.S. Gill, said campaigning period and dates of the elections in the state also figured during the discussion. The election commissioner, Mr. G.V. G. Krishnamoorthy, said while examining the problem in the wake of the Supreme Court directions today, the commission and the government have taken into account the latest list of nominations filed in the state till expiry time today. He said the Jammu and Kashmir governor, General K.V. Krishna Rao, and the commission is in touch with each other on the law and

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order situation in the state and the atmosphere in the valley after the declaration of the poll dates. He said the meeting between the center and the commission will continue tomorrow morning as both the sides have to inform the Supreme Court about a consensus in the morning."

India: Spokesman Hopes Dhaka Events To Result in Elections

BK0304160196 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Bangladesh president, Mr. Abdur Rahman Biswas, today appointed 10 advisers for the nonparty caretaker government. They were administered the oath of office at a ceremony in Dhaka this evening. The advisers will be allotted portfolios later.

In New Delhi, an External Affairs Ministry spokesman today expressed the hope that the developments in Bangladesh will lead to restoration of normalcy and enable the democratic process of elections to go ahead. He said India's policy toward Bangladesh is motivated by friendship and a desire to develop cooperative ties between the two countries.

India: Major Bid To Break 'Economic Isolation' To Be Made

BK0304152696 Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English 1 Apr 96 p 1

[Report by Priya Ranjan Dash]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] India will soon make a major bid to break its international economic isolation by forging new alliances and consolidating some of the existing links, highly-placed commerce ministry officials said.

Two significant initiatives are currently on the negotiating table: a special partnership with France and a trilateral trading arrangement involving India, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

In a related move, the ministry will get a trust registered on Tuesday to operate the India Brand Equity Fund with an ambitious goal of making the "Made in India" label popular in overseas markets.

Also, for the first time, the ministry has prepared a comprehensive report on commodity-wise and market-wise analysis of trade opportunities and barriers. The report will form the basis for India's plan to engage major trade partners in a trade opening and facilitating dialogue.

Officials admitted that largely due to its inward-looking policies in the past, India remained isolated in the emerging world economic order of trading blocs, strategic alliances and integrated markets. This in turn became a stumbling block when India attempted to globalise its economy.

Efforts in the last few years to get closer to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) have, however, resulted in India's elevation from ASEAN's sectoral dialogue partner to a full dialogue partner. South Asia too has been able to forge a preferential trading arrangement of its own and the seven SAPTA (South Asian Free Trade Area) members recently held further trade negotiations in Colombo for realising the goal of SAFTA.

With the end of apartheid in South Africa an opportunity arose for forging an Indian Ocean rim bloc and an initiative was launched involving seven littoral countries, including India. This initiative is proposed to be given a thrust shortly.

In spite of these, some recent international developments have stared policy makers in the face and confirmed that India remains left out. The first ever Asia-Europe summit in Bangkok earlier this month excluded India, signalling that major economic players in the world remained lukewarm to the India-phenomenon.

That is why the special partnerships being negotiated with France has "image-building" as its main objective. This Indo-French alliance will encompass a two-year programme devoted to a "face-lift" for India in Europe. Under the programme, an Indo-French task force of private and semi-public organisations will organise exhibitions.

The proposed Indo-French partnership will complete the series of such arrangements India has entered into in the last three years: the Indo-U.S. Commercial Alliance; the Indo-British Partnership Initiative and the Indo-German Business Committee.

The India Brand Equity Fund will have the government as its founder-trustee with an initial contribution of Rs [rupees] 1 crore. The finance minister, according to officials has agreed to contribute an additional Rs 10 crore next month towards the corpus of the fund. The trust will then raise resources from the trade and industry and a couple of other sources, so as to mobilise a corpus of Rs 50 crore in the next six months.

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Iran

Iran: Khamene'i Discusses Importance of Hajj Ritual

LD0304163496 Tehran IRNA in English 1413 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, April 3, IRNA — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed 'Ali Khamene'i here Wednesday said that deliverance from global arrogance, Zionism and international blasphemy and their anti-Islam activities is an undeniable principle of the hajj rituals.

The leader, speaking to a group of officials in charge of hajj organization and the leader's representative office in Saudi Arabia, stressed that for the same reason that hajj would be meaningless without circumambulating the holy Ka'aba, it would be deprived of a real meaning in the absence of 'deliverance from pagans'.

The supreme leader underscored the significance of 'disavowal of pagans' as the spirit and real meaning of hajj and the most important principle of the rituals.

Stressing that hajj should be a symbol of the divine monotheism, the leader remarked that deliverance from pagans is another principle of monotheism.

Ayatollah Khamene'i stated that today, ringleaders of global blasphemy and diabolic regimes are representing idols of the world, therefore, it is necessary to show antipathy towards them.

The leader emphasized that hajj is an eternal treasure and a key to all political, moral and economic problems facing the world of Islam if performed properly.

The divine hajj rituals have numerous material and moral benefits for the Muslim ummah, especially hajj pilgrims, the leader stated, adding that all should be grateful to such a divine blessing.

Today, the leader said, moral benefits of hajj rituals are no more confined to the pilgrims alone but to the Muslim ummah as a whole. "Today, in the light of the emergence of velayat, hajj has a lot of social blessings. In fact, hajj is one of the blessings of velayat aiming to strengthen the pillars of the religion," Ayatollah Khamene'i remarked.

Therefore, he stressed, all should be grateful to such a blessing and the best way to do this is to take utmost advantage of hajj rituals and to this end no effort should be spared.

Referring to the presence of people in Africa, America, Europe and Asia who are fascinated by the Islamic revolution of Iran, the leader said: "despite all efforts of the enemies, the shining gem of the Islamic system is still successful in attracting masses in various countries. The hajj pilgrims should take the opportunity to display the features of this divine system."

The supreme leader said that today the Muslim nations are in need of the Islamic system pattern to comprehend the deplorable developments happening in the world of Islam.

"They should understand why and for what political reasons the malicious tumor of Israel whose usurpation is clear to every one, and which is not satisfied with occupation of Palestine, is trying to reach the economic veins of the Islamic world in cooperation with the U.S. by taking advantage of the weakness of certain Arab governments."

Iran: Daily Interviews Velayati on European Relations

LD0404094696 Tehran IRNA in English 0919 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, April 4, IRNA — Iranian Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati in an interview with Persian-language daily IRAN Thursday [4 April] said that relations between Iran and Europe should be based on promoting common views and reducing the differences.

Velayati, emphasizing the continuation of constructive dialogs between Iran and Europe, said that the ties between the two sides should be based on mutual interest and respect.

Iran attaches great importance to its relations with Europe, said Velayati, adding that, the European nations in their relations with the Islamic Republic should be independent and not influenced by any transient factors which may have adverse impact on their long-term ties with Iran.

Iran and Europe, undoubtedly, should build up a strong relation to enable the two sides to trust each other and plan for long-term relations, he said.

Iran: President Receives Visiting Kazakh Foreign Minister

LD0304165396 Tehran IRNA in English 1346 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, april 3, irna — Visiting Kazakh Foreign Minister Qasmzhomart Toqayev told president Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani here Wednesday [3 April] that the inauguration of Mashhad-Sarakhs-Tajan railway would be of "strategic" importance for the whole region.

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The Kazakh minister said that the rail track would provide for the economic and commercial development of the Middle East countries.

He also conveyed the best greetings of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev to President Rafsanjani and thanked Iran's efforts to commission the railroad which once operational would connect the landlocked Central Asian countries to the Persian Gulf.

In view of its great significance, President Nazarbayev would take part at the inaugural ceremony of the rail track, he said.

Toqayev called for further deepening of Tehran-Almaty ties and cooperation, saying that in view of its Iran's high commercial and economic potentials in the region and its principled position at the international community, it could be one of the closest friends of Kazakhstan in the Middle East.

Kazakh officials believe that the growing trend of mutual cooperation, especially in the areas of transportation, energy, banking and utilization of natural resources in the Caspian Sea, has entered a new stage in the history of bilateral ties, he said.

Hojjat ol-Eslam Rafsanjani for his part underlined the importance Iran attaches to consolidation of its ties with the Central Asian republics.

Rafsanjani said that long-term cooperation between Iran, Russia and other regional states would play basic and important role in stabilizing peace and tranquility in the whole region.

He added that the Islamic Republic of Iran supported establishment, preservation and strengthening of tranquility in the region.

Enumerating measures adopted by Iran for enhancement of air, ground and sea links in Central Asian republics, the president cited that building of large ports on the Caspian Sea, expansion of roads and railways, laying of two-lane oil pipelines from north to south for export and transit of oil via Iran and conversion of the 1,000 km Tehran-Mashhad railway into two-lane track as being among projects either implemented or in progress to provide necessary facilities for economic and commercial development of regional states.

Iran: Va'ezi Meets With Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister

LD0304192196 Tehran IRNA in English 1849 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Apr. 3., IRNA - Visiting Kazakhstan Deputy Foreign Minister, Vichlav Gizatov, and Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister, Mahmud Va'ezi, on Tuesday [2 April] stressed that the pace for determining the Caspaan Sea legal regime needed be accelerated.

During the meeting the deputy foreign ministers of the two countries agreed on setting up of the meeting at the level of foreign ministers and the deputies of the Caspaan Sea littoral states in order to define the legal status of the Caspian Sea.

News and information department of the Foreign Ministry reported that Kazakhstan deputy foreign minister hinted on the recent visit of the Kazakh oil minister to the Islamic Republic of Iran, who called for Iran's cooperation in "swoop" of Kazakhstan oil.

The Kazakh minister also asked for Iran's participation in the republic's oil industries projects.

In addition, the minister stressed the need for the formation of the expertise groups of the two countries to survey the grounds for cooperation in oil exploration in that visit.

Iranian Deputy Minister Va'ezi described Iran-Kazakh cooperation in the area of oil, energy and transport as significant and stressed more effective cooperation of the two countries.

The two sides focussed on the inauguration of Mashhad-Sarakhs- Tajan railway, visit by Kazakh president to Iran, regional problems and most recent developments in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Iran: Kazakh Consulate Opened in Mashhad

LD0304200996 Tehran IRNA in English 1904 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Mashhad, Apr. 3., IRNA - Consulate of the Republic of Kazakhstan was inaugurated in Mashhad on Wednesday [3 April] in the presence of Kazakh foreign minister, Qasymzhomart Toqayev: Iran's deputy foreign minister, Mahmud Va'ezi: governor general of Khorasan province and a number of foreign officials based in Mashhad.

In the opening ceremony speech, Kazakh foreign minister said that Khorasan province has always enjoyed special preference in the history of relations between the peoples of Iran and Kazakhstan, adding that with the forthcoming inauguration of Tajan-Sarakhs railway this significance will further be enhanced.

"We think Khorasan and Almaty provinces can have close cooperation with each other", Toqayev said, noting that Khorasan has great potential for cooperation with Kazakhstan border provinces in the Caspian Sea region.

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During the ceremony, the economic attache of Kazakh embassy to Tehran, Sabit Taherov, was presented as the first Kazakh consul general to Mashhad.

The Republic of Kazakhstan is the fourth country after Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan to have opened a consulate in Mashhad Province.

Based on figures released by officials of Khorasan province, an average of 250 tourists or traders from Central Asian countries visit the province every day.

Iran: Kazakh Foreign Minister Gives News Conference on Visit

LD0404062096 Tehran IRNA in English 0611 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Mashhad, Khorasan Prov., April 4, IRNA — The visiting Kazakh Foreign Minister, Qasmzhomart Toqayev here Wednesday [3 April] described the Islamic Republic of Iran as an strategic friend for Kazakhstan.

Speaking in a press conference, he added that his country attaches great importance to Iran's international credibility and economic potentials.

Commenting on bilateral cooperation in areas of oil and banking, he expressed hope that Tehran-Almaty relations will expand further.

Toqayev noted that in his talks with President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani it was agreed that Kazakhstan will deliver oil to Iran's northern ports and Iran in return will export the equivalent of the amount through the Persian Gulf.

Implementation of joint projects in Kazakhstan was another major issue discussed in talks with Iranian officials, the Kazakh minister said adding. Iran has voiced readiness to cooperate in this respect.

As to the importance of Sarakhs-Tajan railway, he stated that the track will allow Kazakhstan to have access to outside world through its southern sector.

Heading a delegation, Toqayev arrived in this northeastern city on Wednesday and inaugurated his country's consulate.

Iran: Torkan, Kuwaiti Minister Discuss Transport Cooperation

LD0304131096 Tehran IRNA in English 1157 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, April 3, IRNA — In their first round of talks on Wednesday [3 April] the visiting Kuwaiti Minister of Communications, Electricity and Water Jasim Muhammad al-'Awn and Iranian Minister of Roads and Transportation Akbar Torkan emphasized the expansion of bilateral cooperation in surface, marine and air transportation.

The two ministers exchanged views on transiting goods from the Central Asia and Turkey through the Islamic Republic of Iran to Kuwait and vice versa.

Al-'Awn, referring to the friendly and growing relations between Iran and Kuwait, said Kuwait had always worked to fulfil its commitments towards Iran and was ready to develop its cooperation in the field of transportation.

Al-'Awn expressed his country's commitment to implement the agreements already signed between the two countries and stressed the need for development of tourism and pilgrimage.

The Kuwaiti minister also called for increasing the number of flights between the two countries in order to consolidate trade relations between the two countries.

Torkan for his part outlined the capabilities of Iranian companies to implement infrastructure projects and called for partnership of Iranian companies in Kuwaiti's reconstruction program.

Iran: Kuwaiti Minister Discusses Relations With Majles Speaker

LD0304184396 Tehran IRNA in English 1806 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Apr. 3, IRNA — Iran's Majles speaker, Akbar Nateq-Nuri, in a meeting with Kuwaiti Minister of Telecommunications, Electricity and Water, Jasim Muhammad al-'Awn, on Wednesday [3 April] stressed that any foreign interference in the sensitive Persian Gulf region will foment problems.

Nateq-Nuri called for settlement of the differences of the Persian Gulf nations by the countries in the region.

A report released by the Majles public relations office stated that Nateq-Nuri described expansion of bilateral relations between Iran and Kuwait as being useful for the region, adding that the promotion of close and cordial relations between the regional countries will help remove many doubts and misgivings created by the enemies.

The speaker hinted at the commonalities shared between Iran and Kuwait, stressing this fact that Islam is the most essential and profound basis shared between the two nations.

He pointed out that the enemy's main goal is to oppose Islam, noting that "they (the enemies) give no importance to any particular denomination; however,

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their main objective is to supress the entire Muslim communities."

Speaker of Iran's Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majles) regretted to observe the deplorable state of affair recently imposed on the people of the West Bank of the Jordan river and warned against the expansionist policies of the Qods [Jerusalem]-occupying regime.

Nuri said that the Zionists are still working for the realization of the dream "from Nile to Euphrates".

Elsewhere in his talk to the Kuwaiti minister, Iran's Majles speaker stressed expansion of Iran-Kuwait economic ties through joint investments in the two countries and in Central Asia.

Kuwaiti minister referred to the friendly and close relations between Iran and Kuwait, stressing expansion of all-out relations between the two countries.

Al-'Awn called Iran as one of Kuwait's best trade partners and added "our experience in economic relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran has been successful."

Jasim al-'Awn also called on Islamic countries to set aside their differences and work together to provide the ground for the stability in the region.

Iran: Tehran Discusses Aims of Perry Visit to Egypt

NC0404104496 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 0345 GMT 4 Apr 96

[Commentary by the News Research and Commentary Group]

[FBIS Translated Text] U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry arrived in Egypt yesterday and initiated talks with Egyptian officials. In his meeting with Egyptian President Husni Mubarak and Defense Minister Muhammad Husayn Tantawi he exchanged views on combating what they call 'terrorism,' the issue of the Zionist regime's nuclear weaponry, and, in particular, the leakage of radioactive material from the Dimona reactor.

Observers believe the most important objective of the U.S. defense secretary's visit to Egypt is to intensify the suppression of the Islamic groups in the Middle East, including those in Egypt, and to defuse the outcry over the seepage of radioactive material from the Zionist regime's nuclear base.

The biggest worry for the United States and its regional allies is the proliferating strength of the Islamist process in Islamic countries, especially in the Middle East. This trend can disrupt the plans of the United States and the Zionist regime in the region and shape the future of the region. The Muslims' gaining control of their resources and fate can eliminate the influence of the powers of arrogance and Zionism in the region.

With its pretext of combating terrorism, the United States seeks to isolate the Islamic groups in the regional countries and in this way prevent the Islamist currents from attaining power by inflicting blows on them.

In countries where governments have linked their interests with those of the West and Zionism and are striving to administer society and to preserve their power, the activity of the Islamic groups and efforts to implement Islamic values are considered obstacles in their path. Accordingly, they are also working in parallel with the United States and the Zionist regime to combat Islamic groups.

The United States seeks to capitalize on this convergence by the regional countries by using their governments to suppress the Islamic groups. This is the aim Perry is pursuing on his visit and, in light of Egypt's important role among other regional countries, he is trying to project the process of combating the Islamic groups as one of combating terrorism.

Perry seeks to eliminate Egypt's fears about Israel's nuclear activity and the seepage of radioactive material and thus thwart any coordinated effort among the Arab countries in combating the Zionist regime's nuclear activities. Israel has over 200 nuclear warheads in its nuclear arsenal and continues its illicit nuclear activities unhindered. This has perturbed the regional countries, even those that have extended the hand of compromise to the Zionist regime. These concerns were heightened when it transpired that radioactive material was seeping from the Dimona nuclear power plant.

In view of the differences among the various groups in the Zionist regime, the regional countries are disturbed by the possibility of extremist Jewish cliques gaining influence, with regard to the nuclear power plants, and assuming control of the nuclear weapons.

They have stressed that when an extremist youth can penetrate the Zionist regime's security ring and assassinate its prime minister there is no guarantee that such individuals will not take control of the nuclear arsenal and create a debacle.

All this has resulted in accelerating efforts to combat the nuclear activities of the Zionist regime. The leaking of radioactive material from Dimona has also made the public in the region and beyond vigilant in this regard.

In such circumstances the United States is concerned that efforts like these will undermine the compromise process and erode the Zionist regime's position. Hence, with his visit to Cairo, and his talks with Egyptian

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officials, Perry seeks to rein in these efforts so that by controlling this crisis he can steer it in the direction he wants.

Iran: Tehran Discusses EU Troika's Visit to Iran

NC0404093596 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 0345 GMT 4 Apr 96

[Commentary by the News Research and Commentary Group]

[FBIS Translated Text] The European Union [EU] delegation concluded its visit after a meeting with our country's foreign minister and departed from Iran last night.

This delegation, in Tehran for the past two days, traveled to Iran to convey a message from the EU, which is comprised of 15 West European countries.

The aim of this visit was to assess the way to continue talks between Iran and the EU and to explain the stances of the two sides, especially with regard to regional issues, the conditions, and possible ways and means of boosting bilateral relations and cooperation.

In their meeting with Dr. Velayati, the EU representatives discussed Iran's stance on terrorism and its opposition to the compromise process in the Middle East. Our foreign minister reiterated Iran's principled and logical stance and Islamic Iran's categorical stand with regard to every manifestation of the accursed phenomenon of terrorism and criticized the West's two-sided approach to terrorism and any discussion in this regard by the Western countries. He called on the EU—as an important conglomerate—to adopt an independent policy and refrain from emulating the United States and from being influenced by the propagandist clamor of the Zionists.

The visit by the EU delegation followed recent explosions in the occupied Palestinian territory. The Zionist regime and the U.S. Government accused Iran of indirect involvement in these explosions, due to its moral support for the Islamic Resistance of the two nations of Lebanon and Palestine. They pressured Iran's trading partners to sever economic relations with Iran.

Following the EU foreign ministers' meeting in Palermo, the EU decided to send a delegation to Iran so that the two sides could explain their stances, especially on terrorism and the compromise trend in the Middle East, in an unequivocal manner. In the Tehran talks on this, the Islamic Republic of Iran reiterated its stance while presenting logical and lucid reasons for it.

But Iran received no clear answer, in view of the EU's double- sided approach to terrorism and the EU's posturing on the occupation of Palestinian territories by the Zionists and the nebulous fate of millions of homeless Palestinians.

Iran: Chirac's Visit to Lebanon Called 'Turning Point'

LD0404110296 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1000 GMT 4 Apr 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The visit of French President Jacques Chirac to Lebanon is seen in political circles as a historical visit and a turning point in French policies toward the Middle East. [passage omitted]

Political observers believe that the visit can unfold a new chapter in France's relations with Lebanon, and by extension with the Middle East as a whole. [passage omitted]

French efforts to improve relations with Lebanon are, in fact, the harbinger of a competition with other major powers to exert influence in the Middle East.

In declaring its positions toward Lebanon, France has always stressed that Lebanon must regain its territorial integrity. What is essential for this is the withdrawal of foreign forces from southern Lebanon.

At present, southern Lebanon is under the occupation of the Zionist regime. Despite repeated calls by the Lebanese Government for the withdrawal of Israel forces, the Zionist regime has invariably refrained from pulling its forces out of the area. This is despite the fact that UN Security Council Resolution 425 has clearly condemned the occupation of southern Lebanon and called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces. Nonetheless, the United States still supports Israel and has always given the cold shoulder to all demands put forward by the Lebanese Government.

Israel and the United States state that the withdrawal of Israeli forces is conditional upon the disarming of the Lebanese resistance forces. It is for this reason that political observers believe that the return of France to the arena of Lebanon and its support for the territorial integrity of that country — a position that clearly contradicts the stances of Israel and the United States — can set the policies of France and the United States toward the Middle East as a whole, and Lebanon in particular, against each other.

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Iran: Radio on Meeting of Iraqi Opposition Groups in Syria

LD0304185396 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1530 GMT 3 Apr 96

[Unattributed commentary: "Meeting of Iraqi Opposition Groups in Damascus"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] High-level leaders of 11 Iraqi opposition parties and groups start their meeting on how to fight the Iraqi regime in Damascus, Syria, on Wednesday 3 April. This meeting is held two years after the last all-encompassing conference of the Iraqi opposition groups was held in the Iraqi Kurdistan. Although under [the] previous conference the Baghdad opposition, stressing their common objective of toppling the Iraqi regime, tried to find practical and unifying strategies for their struggle against the government of Saddam Husayn, they did not achieve any success in realizing that goal.

Political observers count a number of reasons for the Iraqi opposition's weakness in their fight against Baghdad. One of these reasons is the dependence of some of those groups on foreign supporters. Outside powers largely follow their interests in Iraq. Being dependent on them, therefore, affects the views and political conducts of such opposition organizations that depend on them for support. Lack of facilities and forces on top of organizational flaws are regarded as other reasons for the unsuccessful record of Iraqi opposition. Also, most of the opposition groups raise illogical demands in discussions on unity and cooperation among themselves to fight the Iraqi regime.

In the midst of all this, experts on Iraqi affairs think that under current circumstances which the Iraqi people are entangled with, economic sanctions of the UN Security Council [word indistinct], and serious moves to relieve them is a more urgent problem to take care of.

Meanwhile, following the defection, return, and execution of several senior officers of the Iraqi military, including Lieutenant- General Husayn Kamil Hasan, Saddam Husayn's son-in-law, the Iraqi regime seems to be more shaky than ever before now. To evade negative consequences of these events and portray itself as legitimate, Baghdad has been forced to hold a presidential referendum and parliamentary elections in recent months. Opposition groups, though, have called such moves by the Iraqi regime as a hollow-shell democracy and condemned them.

Informed sources believe that considering the complexity of the situation in Iraq, if opposition groups want to achieve their goals and participate in the future affairs of their country, they should evaluate the situation more realistically. In line with this, the most important issue that these groups have been, and are, facing in their previous and current conferences is the creation of unity and coordination in their actions. This is why the Baghdad opposition groups have announced the finding of a unified and practical method to fight the Iraqi regime as a main article on the agenda of the Damascus conference.

Iran: Iranian Airline To Carry Pilgrims To Jeddah

LD0304175196 Tehran IRNA in English 1706 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, April 3, IRNA — The Islamic Republic's Airlines (Iran Air) is to conduct flights from Sunday [7 April] for the transfer of 4,980 pilgrims to Jeddah for hajj rituals, director general of the Public Relations Department of Iran Air, Saeed Razzaqi said here Wednesday [3 April].

Razzaqi said that the Islamic Republic of Iran's Airlines would conduct 17 hajj-flights on the first day in order to transport pilgrims from 13 Iranian cities to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

He added that five out of total flights would be carried out from the capital city of Tehran with full capacity of 2,124 passengers, two from Tabriz (East Azerbaijan Province), four from Mashhad (Khorasan Province) with 640 passengers, two from Shiraz (Fars Province) with 556 passengers, two from Bandar-e Abbas (Hormuzgan Province) with 320 passengers and two from Kermanshah with 320 passengers.

Iran: Official on Second Round of Majles Elections

LD0304221096 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1930 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Following the Guardian Council's approval of a proposal by the Interior Ministry to hold the second round of the Fifth Majles elections on Friday, 19 April, Mr. Tabesh, the head of the election headquarters, announced: All the governors and district heads in election constituencies where a second round of elections are to be held are duty-bound to post a list of the second round election candidates in their respective constituencies on Wednesday, 10 April.

He added: Candidates whose names are declared in this way will be allowed to carry out their election campaigns from the morning of Thursday, 11 April, until midnight on Wednesday, 17 April.

He further announced: On 19 April there will be by-elections in the Tehran and Mazandaran provinces for the Assembly of Experts. In these elections the people

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of each province will be electing one member to the Assembly.

Concerning those constituencies whose election results have been invalidated, the head of election headquarters said: Polls in these constituencies will be held as by-elections five months after the second round of local Majles elections.

Iran: Official Comments on Esfahan Elections

LD0304203196 Tehran IRNA in English 2009 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Esfahan, Esfahan Prov., April 3, IRNA — Governor General of Iran's central province of Esfahan Eshaq Jahangiri said here today whatever question existed in the minds of the Guardians' Council he hoped the elections result for the province would not be declared void.

He said 564,000 persons or 63 per cent of the provincial adult suffrage had participated in the elections for Iran's legislative assembly last month, against only 35 per cent for the previous elections, and added administrators of the elections had closely collaborated with supervisory commissioners to ensure a healthy conduct of the elections.

The governor general of Esfahan Province hoped the elections in the province would not be declared void, and expressed hope that members of the Guardians Council would opt for fool-proof devices and counter-checks to make double sure that the post-facto reports they receive on the elections in that province would be true and unbiased.

He commented that certain elements might want to exploit the decision of the guardians council to void the results of the elections in Esfahan Province, and said if the council had questions on only one of the candidates they would be better advised to rely on other devices for discovering and ascertaining facts on that single candidate rather than opt to cancel the elections in that province in its entirety.

Iran: SALAM Column Reflects Social, Economic Problems

WA2803180196 FOREIGN BROADCAST INFORMATION SERVICE MEDIA NOTE

[FBIS Report]

1996 Series, Number 3

The Tehran daily SALAM carries a regular column, "Hello, SALAM" based on telephoned-in complaints and remarks of ordinary Iranian citizens. The following series of dialogues between callers and the paper are excerpted from editions from the latter part of January. These particular complaints deal with relations with Bahrain; Syrian and Israeli relations; the U.S. plan to destabilize Iran; elections; inflation; lack of security; social justice; Dr. Velayati's comments about Dr. Sorush; gas assistance to Turkey; freedom; and the chaotic airport inspections.

On Bahrain:

[Caller] I am a shi'a from Bahrain and studying at the Iranian school in Bahrain. I have to tell you that the only hope of the shi'as, who make up the majority of the population, is Iran. They expect the Iranian officials to take part actively in the Bahrain situation. However, neither the embassy nor other components have any involvement or even connections. Even worse, news and events of Bahrain are not broadcast well in Persian and Arabic from radio and television, although the population of Bahrain is constantly listening and watching. These have a great effect on people's state of mind. Help us a little bit more in the path ahead of us [27 Jan 96]

On Syrian, Israeli Relations:

[Caller] The difference between Syria and Israel is about the Golan Heights. It is not an ideological difference. It will be resolved some day and end in peace as was the case between Iran and Iraq. It is not unlikely for Syria to come to an understanding with Israel and get back the Golan Heights. This is not a good reason for us to be on bad terms with the entire world because of Syria.

[SALAM] We must tell this to this esteemed reader. If someone were to enter your neighbor's house by force and kick out the members of the household and proceed to make changes in the structure of the house, wouldn't you, as an observer of this incident, think that if he were to be left alone to do what he wishes with the first house, that he will come next to your house and that of the other neighbors? Particularly, that this aggressor does not respect any of the human principles and that he has stated from the beginning that his boundaries extend to all the houses of the neighborhood and the city? The Arab countries are deluding themselves if they think that the illegitimate aspirations of Israel will remain limited to the occupied Palestinian land. If Israel has not usurped the other neighboring countries so far, it is because of the strong resistance, somewhat weakened today. If there were no such resistance, Israel might have fulfilled its long-standing wishes of stretching from the Euphrates to the Nile. [29 Jan 96]

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On the U.S. Plan To Destabilize Iran:

[Caller] When the $20 million U.S. plan against Iran is announced in the mass media without informing people of its details, people like me imagine that this is some kind of disinformation to take people's mind off difficulties such as the high cost of living and shortages or to encourage their participation in the elections.

[SALAM] There is no doubt that $20 million have been approved by the U.S. Congress againt Iran. However, it is unfortunate that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Islamic Republic News Agency did not attempt to obtain the text of the bill and put it at the disposal of the public. The American officials, no matter how self-centered and conceited, have this much common sense to understand that $20 million would not even be sufficient to make Rabbani's [Afghan President Borhanoddin Rabbani] government fall. They spent billions of dollars in the war against Iraq and Saddam is still in power. How do they want to overthrow a system which has risen from revolution?! Yes, what was made available to the press was simply news analysis, not the original text. Unfortunately, this manner of providing news has become a habit. [17 Jan 96]

On Elections:

[Caller] Due to your repeated invitation, I have decided to participate in the elections. However, there will be no left-wing candidate. Even if there is a candidate, the Council of Guardians will disqualify him. Then, participation means approval of the situation. I would like SALAM to introduce several left-wing candidates.

[SALAM] We might be able to provide some names after the registration and the approval of the candidates, provided they themselves are agreeable to it, because recently we heard one of the well-known figures from among the Traditional [Sonnati] Right was eliminated from the list. The reason for this was that he did not force the ladies who worked under him to wear the chador [note: the long, loose head to floor covering for women]. Secondly, he associated a little too much with a couple of people from the minority wing in the Majles. In such an atmosphere, there are many who pretend. Our opinion is that those who enter the political scene should express and defend their opinion frankly. These positions are not so important that anyone needs to show himself other than what he is. [20 Jan 96]

[Caller] Tell the group of ministers who defend the president that the group that went to the Majles defending Hashemi did not do a thing for the people, other than cause the inflation and the cost of living to go up. What is the goal of this group with these slogans?

[SALAM] The new group, the group siding with the president, was united with the Traditional Right and has a hand in the political plan and restructuring as well as the creation of the prevailing political and cultural atmosphere. Now, we have to wait for the new group, which is called the Modern Right by some analysts, to clarify its positions in all areas. The explanations of the president regarding the reason for the split was the request to place the names of five individuals on the Militant Clergy Association [Jame'eh-ye Rowhaniyat-e Mobarez] list, which they refused to do. If we assume that the entire reason for the split was this, it means that the difference between the Modern Right and the Traditional Right is 16 percent (five out of 30 people). It also means that the Traditional Right is not willing to accept even this much deviation. It testifies to their closed-in ways. Not only have they refused to integrate those individuals; they are opposed to their existence. They have talked about prosecuting them! [24 Jan 96]

[Caller] On the one hand you refuse to name a candidate and on the other, you invite people to participate fully in the elections. If taking part in the elections is right, why don't you participate? And if it is not right, why do you encourage the people to participate?

[SALAM] If the conditions are not suitable for the left wing, within the bounds of the Militant Clerics Society [Rowhaniyun-e Mobarez], to announce a list of candidates, some of these people will declare their candidacy just the same in Tehran and in the provinces. That is why the people are encouraged to participate in the elections. [28 Jan 96]

On Inflation:

[Caller] Do you think that anything other than stealing, profiteering, embezzling, bribery and all other types of financial corruption and dealings, fraud in transactions, cheating in production and dozens of other ways, the names of which I do not know, could possibly approach the gap between an inflation rate of 50 percent on one hand and the median rise income of 10 to 15 percent? [14 Jan 96]

On Lack of Security:

[Caller] We are residents of the industrial city and are at our wit's end in regard to the security of this area. We ask that the officials ensure the safety of this area. There is not a night where we don't have theft.

[SALAM] This dear reader has not specified whether he means the Alborz Industrial City or some other place. However, the complaints of city-dwellers against lack of housing and vehicle security are very numerous and are not limited to a particular district. [15 Jan 96]

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On Social Justice:

[Caller] Considering that a teacher with a diploma and four years of teaching experience earns 10,000 tumans a month and informed sources tell us that some government supervisors earn over 200,000 tumans, talking about social justice is meaningless. [16 Jan 96]

On Velayati's Comments about Dr. Sorush:

[Caller] In regard to Dr. Velayati's objection to Dr. Sorush's talk, that a public forum is not the place for scientific discussion, I have to say that Mr. Sorush's audience is not made up of ordinary common people. They are young people in the field of science and technology at the university — the cradle for science and knowledge. Even if the talks sometimes took place at the mosques, the audience consisted of students and educated people. If Dr. Velayati's comments were correct, radio and television should at no time be the vehicle for scientific discussion because that audience is far more uneducated than those attending a conference. Furthermore, considering that the topic and the address are advertised in advance, participants no doubt are more or less qualified to attend the event. Finally, I advise Mr. Velayati to limit himself to his foreign travels. Since he is a good man, we hope that his travels will be useful, if not for us, at least for him and his friends at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [16 Jan 96]

On Gas Assistance to Turkey:

[Caller] I read in SALAM that Iran will resolve Turkey's gas difficulties. This news justifies an Azari proverb which goes like this: "She cannot apply make-up to her own face, so she volunteers to apply it to the bride on her wedding day." Have they resolved the gas and petroleum problems of our own country that they assist others in their difficulties?!!! [16 Jan 96]

[Caller] I heard the officials are going to resolve Turkey's gas problem. Now that these gentlemen have labored and will gratify Turkey, maybe they could find someone to solve Esfehan's gas problem. We do not have any gas in this extreme cold and burn wood to keep warm. And if these gentlemen cannot do it themselves, we call call for someone to come from Turkey and resolve this problem. [24 Jan 96]

On Freedom:

[Caller] Mr. Yazdi said that there is freedom of the press in Iran. Tell him for me that not too long ago they closed down two newspapers.

[SALAM] One of the press directors had said that the press is free to ask any question and the officials are free to answer or not! Based on this premise, one can say that the press is free to complain and the one in charge is free to look into it or not! The Majles can pass a law and the government is free not to observe it! People are free to register for the elections and others are free to disqualify them! People are free to say whatever they want wherever they want and the Voice and Vision [note: Iranian Radio and Television] is free to shower praise on whomever it wants. The security forces are free to declare that we have no security problems, but the armed robbers and thieves are free, too, to enter into houses in plain daylight and take what they will. Of course, the homeowner is free, too, to give thanks that they did not kill him. We are all benefiting from this freedom for the time being. [17 Jan 96]

On Chaotic Airport Inspections:

[Caller] We went to Kermanshah during the winter vacation. On our return, at the Kermanshah airport, the ladies took a 10 German marks coin out of my 12-year old daughter's purse. They called it currency smuggling and caused a lot of pain to my daughter. I want to know whether the possession of 10 marks by my daughter given to her by her uncle can be considered currency smuggling? And would they have dealt the same way with professional smugglers as they did with my 12-year old daughter? [25 Jan 96]

Nepal & Bhutan

Nepal: Editorial Urges Bhutanese Refugees To End 'Armed Struggle'

BK0404033796 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 2 Apr 96

[Editorial: "Not Through Armed Struggle"—received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The quest for establishing democracy and basic human rights in the feudal kingdom of Bhutan appears to be taking a new turn with the announcement that armed struggle will soon be launched from within Bhutan itself to achieve the goal. This decision by the Bhutan Coalition for Democratic Movement [BCDM] was obviously the result of frustration that nothing was being done for the repatriation of Bhutanese refugees and no political reforms are in sight in the feudalistic state. There is no denying that the banned Bhutanese political parties are losing their patience.

The Bhutanese refugees themselves have been undertaking appeal marches, nullified by Indian authorities by arresting them. The peaceful marches to appeal to King Jigme Singhe Wangchuck had drawn international attention and the European Union (EU) had come out

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strongly in favour of the refugees. The international momentum in Bhutanese refugee problem was, therefore, slowly building up. The visit of the Foreign Minister along with Kathmandu based diplomats to the refugee camps on Sunday [31 March] was yet another indications that the world is gradually coming to realise the plight of the refugees. There was little for the Bhutanese to be frustrated about. But only the refugees know the anguish and pain of being driven away from their homes. In addition, what must be clearly understood in the BCDM's armed movement decision is that it is not merely for the return home of the refugees but more importantly the establishment of democracy and fundamental human rights in Bhutan, both attributes which the unfortunate country never enjoyed.

Yet armed struggle is not the right answer. The BCDM should reconsider its decision. Violence has never solved any problems. In fact, any armed struggle in a country where foreign army is based is not only bound to fail but it will also render the country BCDM so dearly loved into a chaotic zone, devoid of safety and security. It will be the people rather than the autocratic rulers who will suffer. The backlash then will be complete. His Majesty's Government must also ensure that Nepal is not used in any way to carry out any part of their armed struggle. Even though it is India and not Nepal which is Bhutan's immediate neighbour some misguided Bhutanese fighters for democracy could use Nepal as a base.

This must be prevented. It must be made clear to the banned Bhutanese political parties that in as much as Nepal sympathises with their desire to attain democracy and basic human rights in their country, it is a matter which the Bhutanese will have to settle for themselves. Nepal, of course, cannot but feel for the cause of democracy in Bhutan specially as the pro-democracy movement in Bhutan was inspired by the similar movement in Nepal and the refugees had begun flowing after the suppression of that movement in September 1990. But while Nepal should be happy when and if ever democracy is established in Bhutan and its people able to enjoy basic freedoms, its prime concern and top priority should be the return home to Bhutan of the refugees.

It is to be hoped that the Foreign Minister who will head the Nepalese delegation in the April 4 talks with the Bhutanese will come out more successful than his predecessors had been. There is a need for some tough talking which only the last Nepalese leader to the Nepal-Bhutan joint meeting had done. The Foreign Minister is well aware of the high cost Nepal is having to bear in terms of social, economic and political consequences of the presence of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. And sooner Nepal is rid of the problem, the better it will be for all including Bhutan.

Nepal: Officials View New Talks on Bhutanese Refugee Issue

BK0404040196 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 3 Apr 96

[Report by Ram Babu Shah—received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] KATHMANDU, April 2 - The nation's attention is focused on the Seventh Round of Nepal-Bhutan ministerial talks from April 4 to 8 as it will determine the fate of more than 80 thousand Bhutanese refugees languishing in Nepal.

This round holds special significance as this will be the first time that talks will be held at the foreign minister level.

Reacting to the vocal support extending by the European Parliament to the refugees and the warning to Bhutan Government, Foreign Secretary Kedar Bhakta Shrestha said, "This does not imply that we have internationalised the issue. It is still very much bilateral." On the categorisation of refugees, Shrestha explicitly says, "Our stand has not shifted. Bhutan must take back all its citizen." [passage omitted]

However, on the question of India's stand, Nepal's new ambassador to New Delhi Prof Lok Raj Baral is sensing a change of attitude. "The Nepali speaking belt of East and North East India is coming in support of the refugees creating pressure on Jyoti Basu's government in West Bengal. In turn, Jyoti Basu has asked PM [Prime Minister] Rao to intervene in the issue," he says. Ambassador Baral is in Kathmandu in connection with the talks.

Meanwhile, according to a leading Indian newspaper, Rao is learnt to be giving hints for resolving the crisis as quickly as possible. However, a high ranking foreign ministry official told The Kathmandu Post on condition of anonymity that he does not believe the foreign ministerial level talks will yield any result because of Bhutan's policy to cut down the number of the people of Nepalese origin in Bhutan. He is also skeptical of Nepal's call to involve India in the negotiations. "Because of the 1949 Treaty between India and Bhutan, India cannot go against Bhutan's interest," he says. [passage omitted]

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Nepal: Daily Reports on Outbreak of 'Mysterious Disease'

BK0404090796 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 3 Apr 96

[Received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KATHMANDU, April 2—In the face of government's continuous negligence in finding the mysterious disease even after two months that broke out in different districts of the country, the reports of deaths by the disease are continuously pouring in.

"The number of people who died of mysterious disease in Bajura district have reached 171 in 10 VDCs [expansion unknown], Padam Shahi from Bajura informed in a telephone conversation to The Kathmandu Post.

According to Shahi, in Kailashmandu village, 50 died of mysterious disease. Similarly, 15 died of the disease in Jugada, 12 in Barabish, 20 in Badhu, 10 in Kuladevamandu, 7 in Jayabageshwari, 20 in Brahamtola, 9 in Jukot, 9 in Kada and 10 in Toli VDC. It is learnt that the unknown disease is also widely spreading in Achham district. According to an information dispatched by Ram Kumar from Sanfe Bagar, more than 80 people have died of the disease there.

Talking to The Kathmandu Post, Kalyan Pandey, Director General of Department of Health from Doti said that a team of health assistants and doctors was sent to Jajarkot, Achham and Bajura. Health Minister Arjun Narsingh KC also accompanied the team. KC, however, is learnt to have cancelled the trip to Bajura. But he visited Jajarkot and Achham's Mangalsen and Sutar Villages today.

Pandey said necessary medicines including two health assistants were sent to Achham and Jajarkot.

"The mysterious disease broke out two months ago, but we knew about it very late, said Pandey. So far, 25 in Mangalsen and 22 in Sutar have died.

Meanwhile, reports from Achham district say that more than 27 people have succumbed to the disease so far.

The disease has also rapidly spread to Bajura district. The district's hospital is of no avail due to lack of health workers and doctors.

Nepal: Article Examines 'Foreign Hand' in Politics

BK0404034596 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 3 Apr 96

[Article by MR Josse: "The Bottom Line"—received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] One of the by-products of the UML's [United Marxist-Leninist] recent, unsuccessful no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba was the formal entry of the convenient catch-all—"foreign hand"—into the Nepalese political lexicon.

CLANDESTINE: Although it was certainly not the first time that references were made to foreign or hidden hands clandestinely at work on Nepal's fragile political structures or institutions, the term "foreign hand" never had it so good as of late.

We first had RK Mainali, head of the UML's publicity department, publicity making the allegation that "Indian and American" interests had conspired to thwart the UML's no-confidence gambit. That was followed by the UML's parliamentary board's assessment that while the defeat of its no-trust motion was a simple "numerical" phenomenon, it had been nevertheless achieved a number of positive results such as, for example, clearly separating "nationalist" from "anti-national" forces within the country. Earlier on, of course, UML's leadership had been making it clear to one and all across the nation that its minority government had been toppled last September through a deep, dark conspiracy hatched by domestic and foreign elements which feared that the UML was becoming increasingly popular.

"Foreign hand" received a further lease of life when RPP's [Rashtriya Prajatantra Party] Lokendra Bahadur Chand, who had received formal assurance from the UML that he could be the prime minister in a coalition supported by the UML after the fall of the present three-party combine, at a press conference following the failure of the no-confidence move. On that occasion, Chand—normally a quiet, soft-spoken individual— went on a high decibel verbal offensive against party chairman Surya Bahadur Thapa by charging that "anti-nationals" had conspired to defeat "nationalists".

Though Chand, unlike Mainali, named no names, political observers had no difficulty in understanding that what Chand was actually saying was that Thapa had conspired to puncture his dream of becoming prime minister on the specific urging of New Delhi.

In any case, those who may not have immediately latched upon the true significance of Chand's grave allegation began to understand what was what when a

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Kathmandu datelined item appeared in The Times of India charging that Pakistan, and prince Gyanendra, were behind Chand's attempt to derail the ruling coalition!

DIRTY POLITICS: "Foreign hand" politics took a really dirty turn when Chand's veiled attack on India's interference in Nepal's politics was followed by the publication in Jana Manch vernacular weekly of "proof" that Mirza Dilshad Beg, MP, a Chand loyalist, had been paid Rs [rupees] 27 plus lakhs for Chand's political expenses by the new Pakistan ambassador. (Incidentally, Jana Manch's "proof" was promptly denounced as outright forgery by Beg and the Pakistan embassy both of whom have mentioned the possibility of taking legal action against the weekly.)

Apart from real, or imagined, Indian or Pakistani involvement in the messy state of affairs within the fractured RPP leadership, political observers in Kathmandu had been aware that the West (read primarily the United States) too made strong representations to the RPP not to go along with the UML move.

That brings us to this question: is the "foreign hand" business just a bogey to be raised occasionally to frighten the political innocents or merely for one political side to score debating points against the other?

Is it for real? If so, will it prove to be the bane of our newly re-furbished multi-party polity?

Other questions are: can one at least control if not totally eliminate foreign influence or pressures on the fragile Nepalese political system, including her political parties?

When or where does "friendly advice" end and when does it become tantamount to pressure or good, old fashioned arm-twisting?

Can the frenetic lobbying by human rights groups like Amnesty International on one issue or another (such as the human rights situation in China) also be classified as uncalled for interference in Nepal's domestic affairs?

Similarly,what does or can one say when the "free" press of Country A launches a well orchestrated destabilisation or disinformation campaign against a particular government, party or political groups in Country B?

Is that legitimate or does that also fall within the purview of extraneous pressure. Do they constitute an integral component of the "hidden hand" syndrome?

What about local environmental groups, many discreetly funded from lobbies abroad, going about protesting, even overturning projects including those involving massive foreign grants and loans? Could not many an eager-beaver "foreign hand" too be at work there?

To continue, are attempts to bring about "good government" by linking aid with the status of human rights/ democracy fair? Could that not also provide the instrument of the "foreign hand" to surreptitiously work against this or that government?

BANE OR BOGEY? Is it possible, in this age of multi-party democracy, and global satellite communications, to control all foreign pressures or influences that are willy nilly brought to bear on all countries from centres outside their borders? Can it be considered bad form for political parties to be guided by "foreign" ideologies? Should parties desist from accepting donations for political purposes from abroad? Do they, in Nepal, and other countries, really and truly do so?

Finally, was King Mahedra right, after all when he suggested years and years ago that a multi-party system will lead inevitably to making Nepal a cockpit of conflicting, competing foreign political interests?

This columnist's gut feeling is that it is impossible to control all foreign influences or pressures on political parties or incumbent governments particularly in countries that depend on the international donor community or powerful neighbours for a wide spectrum of assistance.

On the other hand, although the Pandora's Box of the multi-party system has admittedly been flung wide open, it cannot be considered legitimate when, or if, foreign political influences reach the level where they are dominant, if not in actual control, as far as the levers of state power are concerned.

Also, while it will clearly be naive for politicians or the media to scream "foreign hand" at the drop of a Bhadgaonley topi, there is no reason for them to keep quiet if extraneous influences have really been active, even effective, in securing some desired political or economic interest by one or another form of coercion.

The only way to tackle the monster of unwarranted, clandestine foreign interference in our domestic political affairs, particularly that which operates outside of public view, is for transparency in the affairs of political parties and for voters to elect people who are known to be persons of integrity, truly concerned with national causes.

Though that, of course, is easier said than done, the independent media have a special duty to expose any foreign or hidden hand— where there is indisputable proof of their menacing presence in the country's politics!

Though the charge of "foreign hand" can be a convenient cover-up for failure if unwarranted foreign inter-

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ference is allowed to operate unchecked it will certainly prove to be a bane for our precious, newly won freedoms.

Nepal: Article Views Trade Figures for First 7 Months

BK0404041496 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 3 Apr 96

[Article by Janardan Dev Pant: "Nepal's Foreign Trade Problems and Prospects—received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KATHMANDU, April 2 — During first seven months of this FY 2052/53, exports at NRs [Nepalese rupees] 10,704 million show a growth of three percent over the corresponding period of FY 2051/52. Exports of woolen carpet (NRs 4,349.5 million), ready-made garments (NRs 2,650.8 million), tanned skin (NRs 204.2 million) have been 1.6%, 15.4%, 5.3% respectively lower in NRs value terms during first seven months of FY 2052/53, as compared to the corresponding period of FY 2051/52. An important item in the growth of exports of items has been pulses. The export of pulses during first seven months of this FY was 333.9 million that is 710.4% increase in the values over the level during first seven months of FY 2051/52. The export trade of Nepal is concentrated on bery limited items and countries. There needs to be diversification of commodity and country. We can start this by exporting off-season vegetables, seeds, fruit, floriculture, potato, etc.

Total imports according to Nepal Rastra Bank records during first seven months of FY 2052/53 were 41,356.4 million, which was higher by 18.3 % than the level in corresponding period of FY 2051/52. This figure does not include goods imported illegally and without being recorded which comes through our open border. It is obvious that our kingdom spends more than it produces and imports more than it exports. Thus, Nepal is running a large trade deficit. Pretty bad, huh?

Trade balance includes exports, re-exports and imports of merchandise. Whereas current account balance reflects the net flow of goods, services (interest and dividends, tourism, financial charges and transportation expenses), and unilateral transfers (pension, remittances, and other transfers for which no specific services are rendered). During FY 2051/52, the Nepalese balance of trade registered a deficit of NRs 47,647.70 million, while the overall current account deficit was NRs 13,373.70 million. Nepal's current account balance/GDP ratio increased from negative 6.1 percent af FY 2050/51 to negative 8.4 percent at FY 2051/52 and it is estimated to increase further in FY 2052/53. The principal reason for this huge difference is very low economic growth.

We do not have government agency (Export-Import Bank) dedicated solely to financing and facilitating Nepalese exports. We need government agency which can provide competitive and easy financing for Nepalese export sales facing foreign competition backed with subsidized official financing. Direct foreign investment, which can be a fruitful means of stimulating rapid growth, is not coming in Nepal due to high political risk. Measures of political risk may include the frequency of changes of government, undue political interference in the working of government owned institutions, the level of violence in the country and so on. Politics is undermining the industrialization process of our country.

A transformational leader refers to the strategy as his vision for his country. The vision must be translated into productivity through development of goals, implementation and monitoring. Productivity is the output as a ratio to the amount of input required to produce it; it is directly proportional to the national per capita income. The principal goal of a real national leader is to increase per capita income and general living standard of her inhabitants. Presently, the per capita GNP (nom) for Nepal, Japan, Germany, South Korea and Thailand is US $ 180, US $ 38750, US $ 23975, US $ 2900 and US $ 2315 respectively. The notion that national competitiveness is derived from abundant natural resources is no more valid. Japan, Germany and few other nations have proved this. Another argument that the national competitiveness is a function of low interest rates and cheap labour is also empirically proven invalid.

Our leaders operated without a consistent plan. They did not respect their plan. They lead people's energy and efforts towards merely wining the elections instead of putting them in the process of development, with proper planning to sustain growth and achieving win-win situation. They reacted to environmental pressures and often lead our kingdom in crisis.

As a citizen of this kingdom, what we want is a strategic nation management (has to do with long term country management, more than one year) and tactical nation management (has to do with short term country management less than one year). We want our leaders to have clear goals that are measurable, achievable and based on variables that our leaders can control, such as US $300 per cap GNP (nom.) by the end of the FY 2056/57. Let us make a consensus on economic policy. Let us keep economic policy, institutions and bureaucracy above politics. If one looks from helicopteric view he finds the root causes of the Nepalese development

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jam are leaders without positive value (vision plus strategy), politicization of economic policy, government institutions and bureaucracy. Let us stop these ill fated procedures and practices for the good of our generation and generations to come.

Pakistan

Pakistan: Bhutto Condemns Assassinations in Kashmir

BK0304160696 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 1500 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has said the growing violence in occupied Kashmir has unmasked the Indian claims of secularism.

In a statement in Islamabad today, she said the recent killing of 28 innocent Kashmiris by Indian troops has shocked the civilized world. The troops had earlier abducted and then murdered the noted human right activist Jalil Andrabi. The desecration of Hazratbal shrine and the brutal assassinations have spread horror and indignation among the people. She said the Kashmiris are not alone in their freedom struggle. She added that the whole world commend their courage and valor but condemn the Indian atrocities.

The prime minister said there is no doubt that the Kashmiri people will sooner or later achieve their objective, which is the right to self-determination. Until then, Pakistan will continue to give them solid support.

Pakistan: Iranian Foreign Minister's Cancellation of Visit Detailed

BK0404083996 Islamabad THE MUSLIM in English 4 Apr 96 pp 1,9

[Report by Aroosa Alam]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad, April 3: In a bid to resolve the differences in perceptions over the Afghan interim mechanism and the role of President Rabbani in any future setup, Iran has proposed Pakistan to officially host intra-Afghan leaders conference in Islamabad.

This is a part of a fresh diplomatic move by Iran and other adjoining countries, which envisages hold of an All Parties Conference Afghan leaders to break the deadlock on the establishment of an interim Afghan council and to restore lasting peace in Afghanistan.

The move also envisages the participation of President Borhanoddin Rabbani in the conference. The Iranian Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati, who was scheduled to visit Pakistan on Thursday, was to deliver proposals to the Pakistan authorities for holding this conference besides extending invitation form President Rafsanjani to President Farooq Leghari to attend the forthcoming Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) to be held in Ashqabad. Mr. Velayati, however abruptly canceled his visit to Islamabad due to unavoidable reasons. Confirming the proposed Iranian initiative, Foreign Minister Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali said Pakistan was waiting for the details of this move from Tehran and after certain clarifications, dates for an intra-Afghan conference would be finalized.

The Foreign Minister said Pakistan was constantly in touch with Iran on the issue of an interim set-up and for the establishment of a broad-based government in Afghanistan. He said in event the all parties Afghan conference takes place in Islamabad, Pakistan will certainly invite Professor Boranoddin Rabbani, as an Afghan leader, to take part in it.

The Foreign Minister said while we were still waiting for Kabul's apology and compensation for the destruction of our mission in Kabul. Pakistan had not broken diplomatic ties with Afghanistan. He said Pakistan still recognized Afghanistan as a sovereign state and has only closed its mission in protest and due to security hazards.

The Foreign Minister said as soon as our requirements were fulfilled by the Kabul administration, we would normalize our diplomatic channels with Kabul.

He said Pakistan fully adheres to its policy of non-interference in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, diplomatic sources maintained that the stepped up mediatory efforts by Iran and other countries were aimed at ensuring a smooth sailing for the crucial forthcoming ECO Summit and to pave way for realization of the objectives of a free market economy and expanding regional cooperation among the member countries.

They maintained that Velayati's postponed visit to Islamabad was aimed at breaking the ice between the two neighboring countries. According to them Mr. Velayati's visit to Pakistan was intended to broker a face-saving deal between Kabul and Islamabad. Under the envisaged arrangement, sources said, Islamabad would agree to re- open its mission in Kabul in return for Kabul's apology and declaration to pay a token compensation for the damages.

Iran feels that Islamabad must normalize its relations with Rabbani, who is still in control of Kabul despite being encircled by rival factions. It wants Islamabad to accept the political as well as the ground realities in Kabul. Tehran wants Islamabad to host the intra-Afghan talks to prevent eruption of fresh round of hostilities between Kabul and other Afghan groups.

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Both Iran and Pakistan agree that with the onset of summer there may be new upsurge of fighting in Kabul. Though Iran and Pakistan had worked very closely for the restoration of peace in Afghanistan, the two countries recently developed differences in perceptions over the interim mechanism. In the process the otherwise friendly Kabul regime of Rabbani turned hostile to Islamabad with a visible Indian interference in Afghanistan.

The Intra-Afghan talks will provide a basis to the warring factions to sit on a conference table with Rabbani to persuade him to step down to facilitate the peace process. Iran expects that during the course of deliberations between the Afghan groups, Islamabad might realize that Rabbani still has a central role to play in efforts to restore a lasting peace in Afghanistan.

President Rabbani during his recent tour to Iran and neighboring Central Asian states has successfully been able to muster adequate support for his peace formula. The warning Afghan groups under the political influence of these countries have already begun to show some flexibility towards Rabbani regime.

It is believed the UN is also showing some interest in the formula which gives a central role to Rabbani party. It may be pointed out here that Hekmatyar is already in negotiations with the Rabbani government.

Meanwhile, Iranian embassy sources here said today that the new date of Iranian Foreign Minister's visit would be announce soon. They said that the visit had been postponed because of some unavoidable reasons.

PPA [Pakistan Press Association] ADDS: Meanwhile Pakistan and Islamic Republic of Iran will contemplate on ways and means to eliminate the increasing drug trafficking across the border of the two countries, when the Interior Minister of the both sides will start their bilateral parleys in the next week in the Federal Capital Islamabad.

Sources in the Interior Ministry told PPA that Iranian Interior Minister Dr. Bashrati will be arriving in Islamabad next week on three days official visit.

During his stay in capital he will call on President Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Interior Minister Nasirullah Khan Babar. He will also meet ANTF [Anti-Narcotics Force] Chief at Force's Headquarter in Rawalpindi.

Pakistan: PRC Envoy Views Bilateral Ties, Indian Border Talks

BK3103113496 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1100 GMT 31 Mar 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] China has appreciated Pakistan's stand on settling disputes peacefully and its efforts to promote regional peace and stability. This was stated by Chinese Ambassador in Pakistan Mr. Zhang Chengli while addressing a function of Pakistan Association of Retired Ambassadors in Pakistan today. He said China has always maintained a stable and good-neighborly friendship with Pakistan. The ambassador said it is a policy of China to further strengthen and develop its relations with Pakistan in various fields like transfer of technology, economy, defense, agriculture, and industry.

Later, talking to newsmen, the Chinese ambassador said that no substantial breakthrough has been made in Sino-Indian boundary demarcation negotiations since 1981 when the two countries opened their talks. About Afghanistan, he said his country supports OIC [Organization of the Islamic Conference] and UN efforts for peace in that country.

Pakistan: PRC Supports Nuclear-Free South Asia

BK0304123896 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1100 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] China has supported the idea of a nuclear free zone in South Asia and expressed the hope that both Pakistan and India will jointly find a solution to resolve their bilateral problems, including Kashmir. These views were expressed by the chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee of National People's Congress, Mr. Zhu Liang, at a luncheon meeting in Beijing with a seven-member delegation of the Punjab assembly.

He described the Pakistan-China relations as extremely cordial and said they were a model to state-to-state relations all over the world. Their bilateral ties had grown smoothly on the basis of the five principle of peaceful coexistence, he added.

The leader of the delegation and speaker of Punjab assembly, Mr. Mohammad Hanif Ramey, said India's development of long-range missiles is a threat not only to Pakistan, but for China. He said Pakistan and India should sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty together to reduce regional tension.

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Pakistan: 'Partial' Strike Observed in Karachi, Hyderabad

BK0304143196 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1400 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A partial strike was observed in Karachi today on a call by the Altaf Group. Main shopping centers and markets were closed, but small markets and shops, particularly which deal in eatables, were open. Public transport plied, except in central and West districs. However, the number of vehicles was thin. The Karachi Transport Corporation is operating its buses as usual. Partial strike was also observed in Hyderabad, but traffic was normal.

Pakistan: Editorial Views India's Expansionist Designs in Region

BK0304124296 Lahore MUSAWAT in Urdu 20 Mar 96 p 4

[Editorial: "India's Expansionist Designs"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Matters pertaining to the country as well as the regional situation were discussed at an extensive meeting between the president and the prime minister in Islamabad the other day. The entire world knows well that India has greatly increased its military strength. It has manufactured Agni and Prithvi missiles and deployed them on its borders with Pakistan, thereby greatly endangering Pakistan's security. In addition, Indian nuclear weapons have also forced Pakistan to ponder its fate. As the president and the prime minister put it, Pakistan has the right to respond to Indian preparations. To hoodwink the world, recently, the Indian Government enacted a drama of holding talks with four so-called Kashmiri Muslims, who are not familiar even to the Kashmiris, not to speak about their popularity on a global level.

Similarly, the border situation is such that by implementing its scheme of fencing the Line of Control [LOC], India wants to accord the LOC a permanent status whereas the entire world knows that the LOC is neither a permanent demarcation line, nor has it been recognized on the international level. As Pakistan's foreign minister stated, Pakistan will never allow India to alter the current LOC status. Moreover, the constant violation of the LOC and incidents such as light and heavy artillery shelling over the past few months have become a routine affair now. During his meeting with the prime minister and the president, while highlighting Indian aggression, Chief of Army Staff General Jahangir Karamat said that our armed forces are always prepared to provide a befitting reply to India. After a confrontation between Indian troops and Pakistani Rangers a couple of days ago, it was decided that the Rangers should be provided with sophisticated weapons to deal with the situation along the borders. Reports say that there have been further clashes in the Sialkot sector. Regarding the question of Kashmir, Pakistan is taking steps to raise the issue with international human rights organizations now. As stated by the foreign minister, Pakistan will get the Kashmiri refugees recognized by the United Nations as well. In any case, India's plans for war, the manufacture of nuclear weapons and missiles, and claims to upgrade its missile range to an intercontinental level within a few years, makes it amply clear that India's war frenzy not only poses a serious threat to the countries of the region, but to those on other continents as well.

Actually, in view of the country's defense requirements, the present government is equipping the armed forces with sophisticated weapons and therefore has also made [as published] with several countries for defense equipment. As far as the question of (?violation) of the LOC by India is concerned, the United Nations as well as peace-loving countries of the world should take serious note of this to see that India's mistake does not pose a threat to peace in Asia.

Pakistan: Editorial Reviews Relations With U.S., India

BK0204125596 Rawalpindi JANG in Urdu 2 Apr 96 p 10

[Editorial: "Pakistan's Relations With U.S. and India — the Foreign Office Needs To Improve its Performance]

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has warned that a second nuclear explosion by India would lead to regrettable results. She stressed that not only would it be damaging, it would be a bad decision for the Subcontinent. Bhutto was speaking at a dinner at the Prime Minister's House in honor of the Corps Commanders and Formation Commanders. She said that in recent months Pakistan has tried its best to apprise the international community of India's nuclear designs and its plans to prepare missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. This has helped the international community to understand the reality of India's adventurism, but it has not yet developed a reaction strong enough to influence India. The prime minister said that India's stubbornness over the Kashmir dispute is the main reason for strained relations between India and Pakistan. She also said that India would never succeed in deceiving the international community by holding sham elections in Kashmir.

Previously the Pakistani Government and the prime minister had been trying to draw the attention of the international community towards India's aggressive designs, its efforts to acquire nuclear weapons and its

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missile program. The prime minister pointed out that the world has begun perceiving the reality of India's designs, but that we need to work harder on this front. In 1974, India conducted its first nuclear explosion. At that time Pakistan's prime minister, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, warned the world that this would be the start of a nuclear arms race in the sub-continent. His prediction was correct. Pakistan was forced to begin its own nuclear program. Pakistan has made great progress in nuclear technology and has acquired the technical capability to manufacture nuclear weapons, but it has made the political decision that it will not manufacture a nuclear bomb. India is manufacturing various types of missiles that can carry nuclear weapons. It has conducted 15 tests of two different models of Prithvi missiles. It is working on the Agni missile and plans to prepare Tarshol and Naag missiles too.

This renewed phase of India's military preparations has again forced Pakistan to warn the international community, but India's activities are not being given the serious attention that it requires. As Pakistan tries to counter the threat posed to its existence, it is being blamed for opposing the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) by acquiring M-11 missiles from China. The United States has admitted that it has no conclusive evidence that Pakistan has acquired this missile. The assistance that Pakistan received from China falls within the MTCR.

A U.S. lobby is trying to deprive Pakistan of the military equipment that it has already purchased. Efforts to annul the Brown Amendment have again been launched. The prime minister has stressed that the Brown Amendment would not be canceled. The prime minister also said that the United States has recognized the geographic, political, and military importance of Pakistan and that it wants to establish close friendly relations with Pakistan. It is true that the normalization of bilateral relations between Pakistan and the United States began as a result of the prime minister's visit to the United States last year, but to think that the United States has realized the political and military importance and the requirement of friendship is only partially correct. We still do not have the basis to believe the United States wants to establish relations with Pakistan within the norms of friendship. The U.S. election campaign has begun and we know from past experiences that U.S. Administrations become cautious during election years. It would not be appropriate to expect the U.S. Government to adopt a generous attitude towards Pakistan. Instead the United States will continue taking practical measures expressing its desire for friendship with Pakistan.

We need not only continue our efforts to save the Brown Amendment from annulment, but we must counter anti-Pakistan lobbies in the United States. The prime minister mentioned in her speech the fields in which we need to make continuous efforts to create a compatibility of views between Pakistan and United States. It is imperative that the Foreign Ministry of Pakistan improve its performance. A better performance must be shown to safeguard our national interests concerning our relations with the United States and India. Some informed circles suspect that the Foreign Office is not as efficient as it was a few years ago. Reports have been published that the Foreign Secretary was being transferred. It is satisfying that this report was contradicted, but an improvement in the Foreign Ministry's performance is still required. Pakistan's performance in the field of foreign policy should be improved. This is the only way that we can counter India's intrigues and hostile activities.

Pakistan: Leghari Meets U.S Congressman, Views 'Moderating' Role

BK0304134396 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1300 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] President Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari has said Pakistan is a democratic, liberal, and progressive country which could play a moderating role between the West and the Muslim world. He was talking to American Congressman, Mr. Charles Wilson, who called on him at the Aiwan-i-Sadar [president house] today.

Talking to the distinguished the guest, the president highlighted that Pakistan also occupies an important strategic location at the crossroads of several important regions and civilizations of the world and could therefore play a very major role for peace and stability in the region. He said Pakistan was willing to have meaningful talks with India to resolve the Kashmir issue, but Indian missile and nuclear programs are aggravating the situation and increasing tensions in the region. He remarked peace in the region will result in numerous economic benefits for all countries of the region and said Pakistan would welcome maximum possible American investment in Pakistan, especially in the energy sector, including generation, transmission, and distribution of thermal and hydel [hydroelectric] power.

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Pakistan: Editorial Views U.S. 'Duplicity' in 'Campaign of Slander'

BK0304111196 Islamabad THE NATION in English 3 Apr 96 p 6

[Editorial: "Stealing a la CIA"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] According to a WASHINGTON POST story, the U.S. intelligence agents had stolen "blueprints" of a Pakistani atom bomb from the luggage of Dr. A.Q. Khan during an overseas trip in the early 1980's. The U.S. intelligence operatives, the paper said, secretly rifled the luggage of Pakistan's chief nuclear weapon designer to find the first concrete evidence of Chinese collaboration with Pakistan. THE WASHINGTON POST, known for its accessibility to lobbies running one or the other campaign against Pakistan, has of late been focusing on "Pakistan-China nuclear nexus" to bring home the message that the two countries were guilty of violating U.S. proliferation laws that call for mandatory sanctions. Whether or not there is any truth in what the paper has published without quoting any sources, the story is more revealing in terms of comprehending the real face of the U.S. self-righteous posture. In its bid to project Pakistan as the "villain of the piece" in nuclear proliferation, the prestigious American daily has deemed it handy to "expose" the dubious dealings of the U.S. intelligence agents. And sees nothing wrong in "stealing" since the mission was accomplished by the agents of a self-designated custodian of international morality, and not an "underdog" being pushed around for "disguising" from the big boss the "secrets" of its nuclear program.

Ironically, Dr. Q.A. Khan, ever since he was charged with illegally exporting nuclear know-how from a European country, has virtually been treated as a persona non grata in the U.S. And, while he and his research laboratory have been singled out for an unending campaign of "slander and disinformation", any Pakistani scientist associated with nuclear physics has been suspected of being a potential bomb-maker. So arbitrary has been the browbeating offensive that even students from Pakistan were denied admissions in faculties in the proximity of nuclear physics. The duplicity of the U.S. approach is self-evident, and speaks volumes for the hypocrisy that characterizes the anti-Pakistan campaign, like the one being spearheaded by THE WASHINGTON POST. It, obviously thinks that the CIA, or any other brand of U.S. agents, is more equal than others when it comes to violating norms of decent behavior.

Pakistan: Editorial on 'Propaganda Blitzkreig' by U.S. Media

BK0304104396 Peshawar THE FRONTIER POST in English 3 Apr 96 p 6

[Editorial: "A Bizarre Twist"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Imparting a bizarre new twist to the U.S. media blitzkrieg against Pakistan, THE WASHINGTON POST has reported a James Bond-type frisking by CIA of Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan's luggage during one of his overseas trips in the early 1980's which had yielded the "first concrete evidence" of Chinese collaboration with Pakistan's bomb effort: the blueprint of a "crude, but highly reliable, Hiroshima-sized weapon"! The POST correspondent concludes, quoting unnamed U.S. officials, that these plans "must have come directly from Beijing". About two months ago a WASHINGTON TIMES correspondent citing fresh intelligence "evidence", had kicked up the "ring magnets" controversy. A similar story in 1992 regarding transfer of missile technology to Pakistan was made the basis of a campaign to discredit Islamabad. The allegation was based on the aerial photographs of some canisters lying at an air force base in Pakistan which were "believed" to contain components of the Chinese M-11 missiles. The issue was however, pushed into the background by the U.S. Administration for lack of "sufficient evidence" to sustain the charge.

Viewed in this context, THE WASHINGTON POST "blueprint" report appears only to be yet another "scoop" dished out by the U.S. print media regarding Pakistan's nuclear programme.

The current spate of "disclosures" since the signing of the Brown Amendment is obviously intended to block actual shipment of the defence hardware to Islamabad for which it has paid in hard currency. It appears that the propaganda blitzkrieg in the U.S. electronic and print media is a part of a coordinated drive by anti-Pakistan lobbies on the Capitol Hill to isolate Islamabad. Six U.S. Senate heavyweights have already moved a bill in the house to scrap the Brown amendment on the basis of alleged violation by Islamabad of the U.S. non-proliferation policy. The timing of all these moves indicates a strategy to turn the heat on Islamabad as a diversionary manoeuvre to allow New Delhi to quietly pursue its nuclear goals. That is why the Indian lobby in Washington has lately become hyper-active. So blatant have been the Indian efforts to manipulate the U.S. policy towards Pakistan and China that the State Department recently had to administer a snub to the Indian Embassy in Washington. Unfortunately, Washington has tended to take Islamabad to task on the flimsiest of grounds while letting off New Delhi

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lightly even in the face of solid evidence of its defiance, i.e. its 1974 nuclear explosion and the 15th Prithvi test it conducted recently despite intense U.S. pressure not to go ahead with the test-firing. And the deployment of the nuclear-capable Prithvi missile along the border with Pakistan is today threatening to trigger a missile race in the region. Washington should see to it that its policy in the region is just and even-handed. It-is-hoped the Clinton administration would not allow the anti-Pakistan media campaign to influence its policy towards Islamabad.

Pakistan: Anti-Islamabad Campaign 'Spearheaded' by U.S. Daily

BK0304100896 Islamabad THE NATION in English 3 Apr 96 pp 1, 5

[APP report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad — THE WASHINGTON POST report that U.S. intelligence agents had seized a blueprint of Pakistani atomic bomb from the luggage of Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan during an overseas trip is part of an orchestrated campaign to malign the renowned scientist and Pakistan, reliable sources said here Tuesday [2 April].

"It is a planted, fabricated and concocted story and is part of an orchestrated campaign going on in American press to defame Pakistan and Dr Khan," the sources told APP.

The U.S. daily quoted unidentified sources as saying that U.S. intelligence agents stole the blueprints of a "Pakistan atomic bomb" from the luggage of Dr Khan during an overseas trip in early 1980's.

The revelation made by POST correspondent Jefferey Smith after a lapse of more than two decades also suggest that the stolen blueprint was the, "first concrete evidence" of Chinese cooperation with Pakistan's alleged bomb efforts. "The story is meant to vilify Pakistan and China," the sources added. Smith and WASHINGTON TIMES correspondent, Gerd have spearheaded a vicious anti-Pakistan and anti-China campaign during the past two months to blame the two countries of violating U.S. proliferation laws which provide for mandatory sanctions.

Both are known to have invariably published material without naming any source or vaguely attributing stories to "intelligence or official sources.

Reiterating that Islamabad is all for nuclear non-proliferation and its nuclear programme is meant for peaceful purposes, the sources said "it is ridiculous to suggest that a scientist of Dr A.Q. Khan's stature carries the blueprint of what they say, is Pakistani atom bomb in his briefcase and that too during his foreign trip." The knowledgeable sources said even otherwise it is a general practice world over that a person working with a sensitive institution is not allowed to take any document from his office even to his house. "How come a man of Dr. Qadeer's stature takes such a sensitive document, if at all, outside his office and that too on a foreign trip," they questioned. "They should have at least got it confirmed whether Dr. A.Q. Khan has undertaken a foreign trip during this period," the sources close to Dr. Khan said and added, "to the best of our knowledge Dr. Khan did not undertake any overseas trip in early eighties," as mentioned by the POST.

Pakistan: Islamabad Seeks Explanation of CTBT Clauses

BK0104092396 Peshawar THE FRONTIER POST in English 1 Apr 96 p 12

[Report by Zaffarullah Khan]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad — Pakistan has sought explanation of two clauses of Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty [CTBT]: On-Sight Inspection (OSI) and International Monitoring System (IMS). Islamabad has also suggested simultaneous signing of CTBT by five nuke club member-states, along with three "undeclared nuke states Israel, India and Pakistan.

Foreign Minister Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali, who has just returned from Geneva after attending the on-going conference of disarmament, apprised a small group of journalists in Parliament lobby about developments at the moot.

Explaining Pakistan's stand on CTBT Sardar Asif Ahmed Ali said, "unlike our conditionality regarding Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), we are for simultaneous enforced membership of CTBT by sight countries, including five nuclear plus three potential nuclear states".

According to the foreign minister, Pakistan has also proposed alternative suggestions regarding OSI and IMS. He, however, did not sound optimistic about successful conclusion of CTBT by June 29, 1996.

It is pertinent to recall that India has asked for a defiant time-frame for elimination of weapons of mass destruction by the nuclear states. Similarly, John Colum, director of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, has urged the South Asian nations to actively participate in the conference on disarmament.

The conference's aim is to bring the 38-participating countries closer on some of the remaining open issues

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on the test ban, such as the scope of the treaty, what exactly would trigger an On-Sight Inspection, and now many sensor stations would be needed around the world to verify the treaty.

Reportedly, there are 1,200 disputed provisions in the draft text of the CTBT. And Ambassador Thomas Graham Jr., President Clinton's special representative on arms control, also visited Pakistan early March last.

Answering a query about Kashmir, Sardar Asif said one could not draw parallel between situation in East Punjab and Indian occupied Kashmir.

He maintained that all parties of held Kashmir had rejected Indian plan to hold elections, but it seemed still adamant to go ahead with this useless drama. "Now even the National Conference has also boycotted the so-called elections", he pointed. He also viewed increasing convergences in the point of views of All Parties Hurriyat Conference and Jamu and Kashmir Liberation Front on different issues.

The foreign minister said India was playing a dangerous game of planting informers in the rank of Mujahideen, and sabotage the movement by eliminating Kashmiri leaders. But it won't succeed on two grounds, first because the plan had been exposed and secondly, Kashmiris struggle had roots in the people.

He recalled that the Sikh's leadership was in the hand of militants and that leadership had started killing Sikhs themselves, but the case of Kashmir was different.

Pakistan: Interior Minister—Embassy Bombing 'Act of Revenge'

BK0204121396 Peshawar THE FRONTIER POST in English 2 Apr 96 p 1

[Report by Islamabad Bureau]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The interior minister Maj. Gen. [Major General] (Retired) Naseerullah Khan Babar Monday [1 April] informed the National Assembly that the bomb blast in the Egyptian Embassy November last was an act of revenge for extradition of Egyptian nationals from Pakistan.

"The conspiracy was hatched in Egypt to send a message that in view of extradition of Egyptian nationals, they would use our soil for terrorist activities," he said while replying to a question by Maulana Abdul Rahim.

The interior minister elaborated that one of the accused, Mohammad Ahmad who purchased the vehicle was identified as a 'terrorist through the efforts of the owner/salesman/mechanic of the show-room.

"One terrorist who drove the vehicle (identity not known) was killed in blast, whereas the second individual, Mohammad Ahmad, died outside the embassy having overseen by the Egyptian and mechanic," he stated, adding that the operational inquiry as it pertained to Pakistan, was closed whereas, the FIR [First Information Report] has been kept open in the event other clues became available or the people apprehended.

Pakistan: Defense Minister Meets With Turkish Official

BK0104142596 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1300 GMT 1 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The visiting Turkish under secretary of defense, Lieutenant General (Tunjer Kilino), held a meeting with the minister of defense, Mr. Aftab Shaban Mirani, in Islamabad today. Talking to the distinguished guest, the defense minister said both Pakistan and Turkey share a common perception on major global and regional issues. Mr. Mirani said the brotherly countries have a desire for closer cooperation in various fields, including defense. The defense minister said setting up of Pakistan-Turkish military consultative group is a major step forward toward institutionalizing mutual interaction. Lt. Gen. (Kilino) said the two countries have always supported each other in all areas and would continue to cooperate in defense sector also.

The Turkish delegation earlier met secretary of defense followed by the sixth meeting of the military consultative group, where they exchanged views on the geopolitical situation and discussed specific projects common to military needs.

Pakistan: Meeting of Military Consultative Group Held With Turkey

BK0204053996 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 0200 GMT 2 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The sixth meeting of Pakistan-Turkey military consultative group was held in Islamabad yesterday to discuss ways for enhancing cooperation in the field of defense production. Defense Secretary Syed Salim Abbas Jilani led the Pakistani delegation, while the Turkish delegation was led by Lieutenant General (Tunjer Kilino). During the meeting, the two sides reported to have identified several projects for increasing cooperation. Earlier, the leader of the Turkish delegation held a meeting with Defense Minister Aftab Shaban Mirani. Mirani said that setting up of Pakistan-Turkey military consultative group is a major step toward institutionalizing their mutual interaction.

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Pakistan: Japanese Official Cited on Kashmir Issue

BK0304053896 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 0300 GMT 3 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Japan has described the Kashmir issue as a serious threat to peace and security in South Asia. The Japanese deputy foreign minister, Mr. (Jinai), while addressing the Japan-Pakistan Joint Commission meeting in Tokyo hoped that the conflict would be resolved peacefully. The foreign secretary, Mr. Najmuddin Sheikh, called upon India to honor its international commitment about the Kashmir problem. He expressed Pakistan's concern over development and deployment of Prithvi missile by India and its nuclear program. He said Pakistan is ready to sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty along with India. On Afghanistan, he offered Pakistan's help to the United Nations for an early settlement. The two sides also discussed bilateral and economic relations.

Pakistan: Kashmiris Submit Memo on 'Atrocities' to Indian Mission

BK0204162096 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 1500 GMT 2 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A number of Kashmiri parties and groups in Islamabad under the auspices of Jammu and Kashmir Citizens' Forum for Freedom this afternoon marched in protest against the brutal killing of 22 people and Kashmir human rights activist Jalil Andrabi in occupied Kashmir by Indian troops.

Addressing the participants, the Kashmiri leaders urged the international community to take immediate notice of the systematic killing of Kashmiris by Indian troops. Later, they submitted a memorandum to the Indian High Commission, urging Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to stop his troops from perpetrating atrocities on Muslims in occupied Kashmir. The memorandum was also signed by Kashmir Committee Chairman Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan. It urged India to hold a plebiscite forthwith in Kashmir in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions.

Pakistan: Editorial on 'Grim' Human Rights Violations in Kashmir

BK0204104296 Islamabad THE MUSLIM in English 2 Apr 96 p 6

[Editorial: "Like Chechens, Kashmiris Are Also Human"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] It is indeed great that the National Assembly of Pakistan has spoken with one voice on the situation in Kashmir. There was never any doubt on how the two sides of the House felt over the issue. What had dismayed non-partisans all over the country was the separate articulation of identical sentiments over the continuing tragedy. This had deprived the issue of the much needed demonstration of unity pleaded for by Chairman Kashmir Committee Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan and several other national leaders.

The National Assembly of Pakistan's resolution of March 31 is a clear and unambiguous statement of what the people of Pakistan feel. Even more heartening for the country is the statement issued by leader of the Opposition Mian Mohammad Nawaz Sharif strongly condemning the stepping up of massacres and other blatant violation of human rights by the occupying forces in held Kashmir. Further, his PML (N) [Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)] members of the Kashmir Committee of the Parliament not only participated in its meeting and on behalf of their party expressed full confidence in Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan's chairmanship but also stated that he had served the Kashmir cause very effectively. All this should demonstrate to everyone the cohesive perception of the people of Pakistan.

It would be a grave mistake if anyone were to mistake all these steps for an attempt to get propaganda mileage through exaggeration. Islamabad is not alone in the appraisal that the situation in Kashmir is grim. Much before the latest downturn in Occupied Kashmir, the U.S. State Department reported, "extra judicial executions and other political killings, torture and excessive use of forces" are generated in India by "intense social tensions, violent secessionist movements and the authorities' attempt to repress them".

The State Department's report on human rights situation in India further took note of the "torture, rape, death of suspects in police custody, arbitrary arrest and incommunicado detention in Kashmir and the Northeast". On the situation until the end of 1995, it had further reported: The authorities in Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir and Assam have special powers to search and arrest without a warrant and every state in India has authorised, under the Telegraph Act, the surveillance of communications, including monitoring telephone conversations and intercepting personal mail.

The State Department reports that common police practices in India are beating, rape, suspension by the feet, crushing of limbs by heavy rollers, electric shocks and burning of the detainees with cigarette and hot rods. A close examination of Indian jails can identify detainees with gouged out eyes. These blinded prisoners are lucky to escape with their lives at least, for Indian security personnel argue that it is much better to put out of action all the dangerous elements rather than go

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through the long drawn tortuous process of seeking mild punishments prescribed under law.

It is strange that for similar allegations against the Soviets, Washington had dubbed Moscow an evil empire and waged its relentless Cold War. At times on the same grounds it even fought shooting wars by proxy. And yet it categorises India as the "most populous democracy in the world". With no comparable allegations made against China, Beijing still remains the foe Washington likes best to hate. On the other hand, New Delhi remains a friend which Washington likes to cultivate both in the economic and military sectors. If this is not an example of standing logic on its head, what else can be!

The situation in Kashmir has taken a turn for the worse since the State Department issued its report for 1995 early last month. Last Saturday [30 March] as many as 22 unarmed persons were massacred in just one incident around Hazratbal in Srinagar. A couple of days earlier, Indian troops murdered Kashmiri human rights activist Jalil Andrabi in the most brutal fashion imaginable. Before his over a fortnight long disappearance which ended with the discovery of his body in a gunny bag floating down the Jhelum River, Andrabi had held a press conference to narrate the long string of harassments he was facing. According to the Voice of America, he had declared that the Indians had decided to eliminate him. This did not deter the Indian troops from taking him away a few days later in the presence of a dozen witnesses. Subsequently, the Indians denied any knowledge of his whereabouts. His body that came floating down the river bore gruesome torture marks. Also his eyes had been gouged out.

The latest action of the Indians in Kashmir is to lay siege to all the mosques and shrines, presumably to deny Kashmiris the right to congregate for any purpose however holy. It is strange that the West knows all this but does not consider it worth its attention. Besides, it is not known what action Islamabad is taking on the diplomatic front to draw attention to the latest Indian escalation against the people of Kashmir who are striving merely to assert their fundamental human right to life and liberty. If Moscow can be pressured to stop its atrocities against Chechens and end its military operations, why New Delhi cannot be told to emulate the Russian example? It should be pointed out to the West that those living in Europe are human no doubt but those living in Asia are not less human either.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka: President Asks Parties To Support Government Initiatives

BK0404032196 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English 4 Apr 96

[Report by Pramod de Silva—received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] ALL political parties which have the people's interests at heart should support the government's political initiatives aimed at ending the protracted ethnic conflict, President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga said yesterday.

"I urge political parties not to sabotage the devolution process, but to suggest improvements to our plans. I am sure that the majority of our people support the concept of devolution and the need to solve the genuine problems of Tamils," the President said.

Speaking at the presentation of pensions to fisherfolk at the BMICH [Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall], Colombo, President Kumaratunga expressed the hope that peace would dawn within two years with the fullest support and cooperation from the people for the government's peace plans.

She said the country needed political leaders who set aside the "vote mentality" in tackling national crises. She called on political parties and the people to "work hand in hand with the government in its endeavour to solve the ethnic problem".

The president said political rivalry should be confined to elections. At other times, especially at a time of a national crisis, political parties and their supporters should adopt a more responsible attitude without seeking narrow political gains.

"The final draft of the devolution proposals will be prepared after taking all viewpoints into account. We would like to implement the proposals for the greater good of the country, despite the objections of a few extremists. We believe we can make it a success".

She stressed that the security forces wage a war against the LTTE and not against the Tamil people. The government had in fact acknowledged that Tamils have genuine grievances which should be redressed without delay.

Youths in the North-East have lost faith in the governing mechanism, she added. A simple pledge to solve their economic problems will not appease them. "This is why they should be made part of the governing process. This way, unity can be achieved through the devolution of power. If we fail to see this reality, we may have to live with the problem forever".

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The government has achieved many military victories during a short period due to proper planning and the provision of adequate, effective weaponry to the security forces. "Although we genuinely sought peace, Prabhakaran did not. This is why we are fighting a war, honestly and effectively"

The President outlined some of the measures taken by the government to fulfil its election pledges. The eradication of fear and suspicion and the creation of an environment in which all can live freely were major achievements. Many laws and regulations have been introduced or strengthened to protect human rights. Gone were the days when those in power used their authority to kill and maim innocent youths.

Commenting on the economic front, she said the government has taken several steps to bring down the cost of living and create employment. Nearly 40, Fortune 500 companies have pledged to start projects in Sri Lanka and four are already underway. These industries are expected to generate employment for thousands of youths.

"We have no intention of making the people paupers by continually heaping subsidies on them. Subsidies are provided to deserving sections of the working population so that they can begin self-employment ventures".

Unlike the previous government which started the open economy but implemented it in a haphazard manner, benefiting only a handful of persons, the PA [People's Alliance] government is commited to an open economic system that gives broader opportunities to all segments of the population, the president observed.

She noted that an enhanced fishermen's pension scheme was just one of the promises fulfilled by the PA. This would be only the beginning of the government's plans for the fisheries sector. Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Minister Indika Gunawardane also spoke.

Sri Lanka: LTTE Reports Attack on Navy, Signature Campaign

BK0404130696 (Internet) Tamil Eelam News WWW in Tamil 1 Apr 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam [LTTE] has reported fierce fighting that lasted for about an hour between the Sea Tigers and the Sri Lankan navy some 16 kms off the coast of Chundikkulam the day before yesterday.

The attack was carried out when a navy convoy of eight vessels was heading toward Trincomalee from Kankesanthurai at noon. An Israeli-built fast attack Dvora vessel was badly damaged by the Black Tigers and sunk. Along with the Sea Tiger combat contingents namely the Nalayini, Nares, and Charles, the Black Tigers also took part in the offensive against the Sri Lankan naval convoy which comprised two (?supply) ships, two gunboats, and four Dvora boats.

Other Sri Lankan naval vessels are also believed to have been badly damaged. The LTTE carried out simultaneous attacks on Sri Lankan Air Force planes and helicopter gunships that rushed to support the navy. Defense Ministry sources announced that on their side, 14 persons, including two officers, were killed in the attack. From the LTTE contingent, 21 valiant Tigers who stood up bravely against the air force and navy including Black Sea Tiger Major Jaganathan, Black Sea Tiger Major Captain Ilayavan, and Lieutenant Colonel Ezhilvanran, embraced martyrdom. It is to be noted that eight of these freedom fighters are women. Captain Ravanan of the anti-air force contingent was also martyred in the battle at sea. We pay our tributes to these national heroes who died in action in the fight to liberate of our country.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga passed certain remarks recently about Tamil groups based in Colombo, who have expressed dissatisfaction over it. In an interview with a journal, Chandrika Kumaratunga said Tamil politicians are half supporting the peace package and that they are dishonest. A Tamil United Liberation Front member says: Chandrika Kumaratunga wants us to take the peace package to the Tamil people and seek their support. However, the peace package is still being disputed. Members of other Tamil groups have also expressed dissatisfaction over Chandrika Kumaratunga's remarks.

A confederation of various people's organizations has decided to send a petition containing 500,000 signatures to the UN Secretary General and all countries of the world. This decision was made at a meeting in Chavakachcheri on 29 March. It was announced that the petition with the 500,000 signatures of affected Tamils will be sent to the international community to highlight their miseries caused by the oppressive acts of the Sri Lankan military. The petition, among other things, will call for an unconditional cease- fire, the commencement of talks for a political solution to the ethnic conflict, the withdrawal of troops from Velikamam, and for necessary steps to be taken to resettle those facing hardship after being displaced from their localities.

Hectic political activities are under way in India after the dates for parliamentary elections have been announced. Political parties have released their list of candidates. Election manifestos have also been released. In its election manifesto, Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam has pointed out that a separate Tamil Eelam

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is the only way the Sri Lankan Tamils can lead a peaceful and dignified life.

The Tigers' aspirations: motherland of Tamil Eelam! Thanks.

Sri Lanka: Troops Kill 14 'Terrorists' in Jaffna

BK0404113496 Colombo Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation International Service in English 1045 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Fourteen terrorists were killed in the Manippay area of the Jaffna peninsula last evening. A military spokesman said that troops have been hunting for LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] infiltrators in the Walikamam division of the peninsula when the confrontation occurred. There were eight women terrorists among the dead. Troops did not suffer any casualties. They recovered a large quantity of arms and ammunition in the subsequent search operation.

Two more terrorists were killed earlier in the day in the Nadiraithiruppu area of Jaffna. The spokesman said that the ongoing clearing operations involves around eight battalions of troops. These include the elite Special Forces. The security forces have been highly successful so far, with the LTTE losing several experienced cadres and a large quantity of arms and ammunition. The clearing operation was launched on the 29th of last month. At least 59 terrorists have been killed in what is known as phase five of Operation Riviresa [Sunshine].

Sri Lanka: Security Forces, LTTE in Battle at Hindu Temple

BK0404112596 Hong Kong AFP in English 1043 GMT 4 Apr 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Colombo, April 4 (AFP) — Security forces fought a fresh battle with Tamil Tiger guerrillas at a Hindu temple in northern Sri Lanka, leaving 41 rebels and five soldiers dead, the military said Thursday [4 April].

Troops surrounded the guerrillas of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) at Sandilipilli in the Jaffna peninsula, triggering a ferocious fire fight on Wednesday, the military said in a statement.

"A number of terrorists got into the Kovil (Hindu temple) and started firing from behind the statues of gods," the statement said adding that five soldiers were killed and 14 wounded in the attack.

It said 41 Tigers were killed by the security forces which recovered all the rebel bodies and also several weapons, including rocket-propelled grenades and radio equipment.

The Tiger guerrillas are leading a protracted campaign for independence in the island's northern and eastern regions where the two million Tamil minority is concentrated. More than 540,000 people have died in bitter fighting in the past 23 years.

Sri Lanka: Security Forces, Police Raid Suspected LTTE Arms Dump

BK0404031096 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English 4 Apr 96

[Received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] SECURITY forces in a predawn raid on a deserted 20-perch block at Mahawatte, Grandpass yesterday unearthed a cache of arms and explosives believed to have been buried by the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam].

Police who made a further search of the premises later in the day tumbled on more arms and explosives.

Troops who first searched a garage in the premises found four kilos of type C-4 plastic explosives, 20 rounds of T 56 ammunition, one magazine, two hand grenades, a time bomb switch, one 01x 09 Vlt. battery and five cyanide capsules.

Grandpass Police later dug up the entire premises with a caterpillar machine which unearthed more lethal items which included two kilos of explosives, 100 rounds of T 56 ammunition, 2 T 56 magazines, 15 detonators, two pouches and two pouch belts.

Troops also arrested an LTTE suspect and handed him over to Police.

It was on the same premises that the terrorists who attacked the oil installations in Kolonnawa and Orugodawatte had parked the two lorries they had used, Police said.

The two lorries were about to leave for Vavuniya at the time Police made the detection. Police also found bomb making materials ingeniously concealed in the lorries.

An LTTE cadre named Wimalanandan who had occupied the premises made his getaway soon after the detection of the two lorries. Investigations later revealed that Wimalanandan was an LTTE hardcore who was responsible for transporting bomb making materials to Colombo from Vavuniya.

A Police team led by Chief Inspector Neil Hettiarachchi and Inspector N.J.Abeysekera are investigating under the supervision of SSP [Senior Superintendant of Police] Lionel Gunatillake and ASPs [Assistant Superintendant of Police] Kithsiri Ganegama and P. Ignatius, directed by the army and DIG Colombo D.M.P. Dissanayake.

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